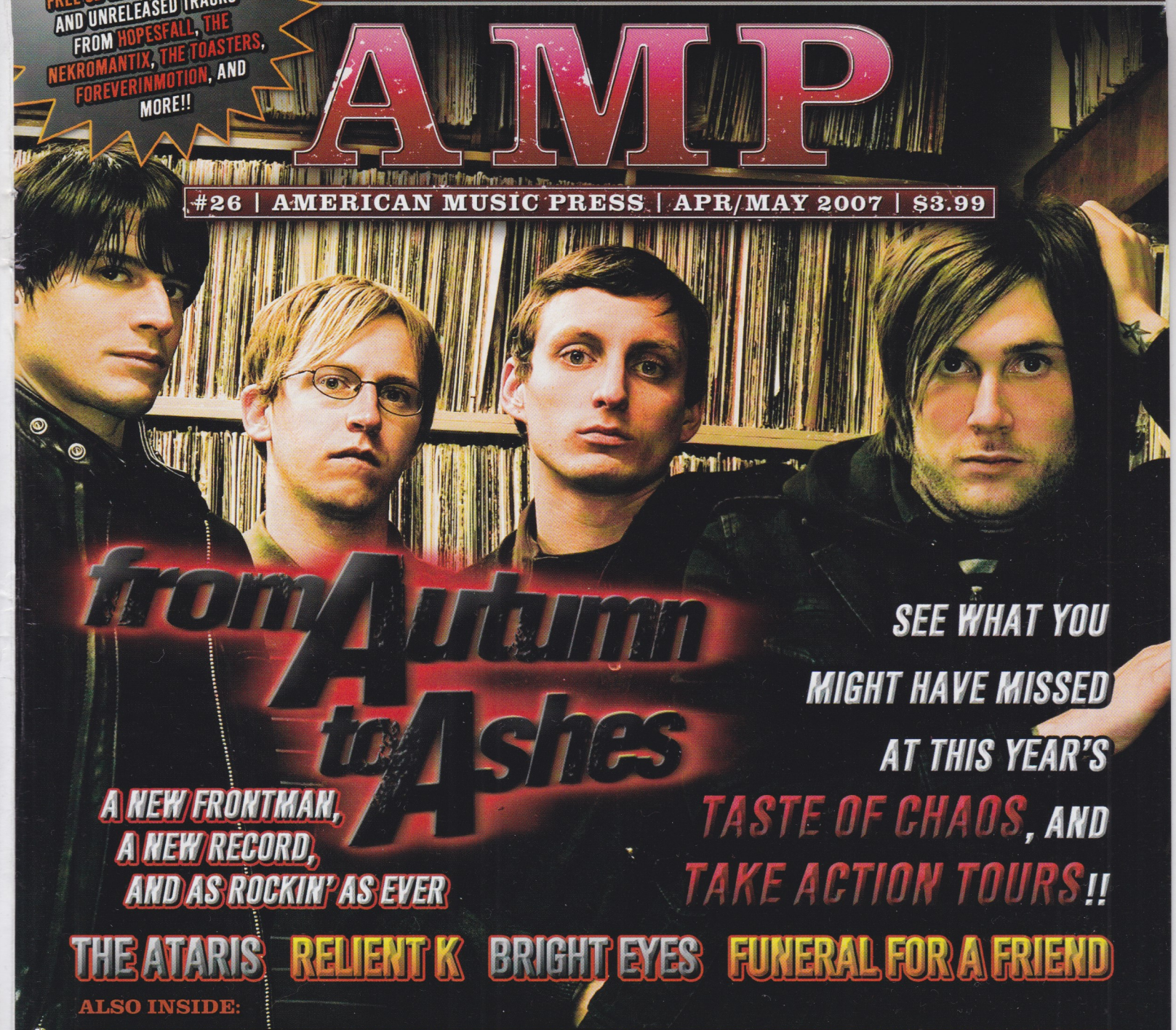
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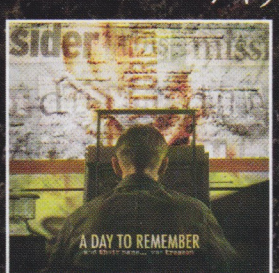
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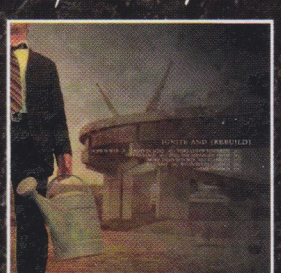
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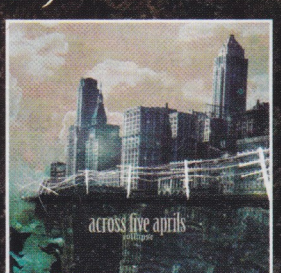
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PHOTO: DANI DEL PICO

THE RECEIVING END OF SIRENS

By Dani Del Pico

"Yeah we do it for the money, that's why we are in this lavish bus." Brendan Brown jokingly quips to me as I try a different sitting position to adopt for the next 30 minutes. "The plasma might be taking up too much of the room over there," Alex Bars matter-of-factly points out with a casual hand wave.

"You should check out the back lounge sometime." Brendan adds as all three of us start to smile and laugh while sitting in The Receiving End of Sirens tour...van. Air conditioning is on at full blast as I rested my arm on a box of unopened boxes of guitar strings, and one van bench down sat Brendan Brown and Alex Bars, the singers and rhythm guitarist and bass guitarist respectively of The Receiving End of Sirens. TREOS as they are commonly nicknamed are currently on the Welcome to the Universe $2 Bill Tour with headliners 30 Seconds to Mars, and featuring bands such as Head Automatica, Rock Kills Kid & Cobra Starship. Tonight was a sold out show at Hard Rock Live Orlando, and people were packed in breathing in every performer as the music spilled from the stage and submersed its captives in emotionally fused and catchy tunes.

The origins of The Receiving End of Sirens was explained by Brown, "Alex and I were in a band in high school, moved to Boston with no plans of really starting a band and just start writing music. We had a dorm room at our college and then we wrote a bunch of songs and decided we should start a band for fun pretty much. We found a drummer in our cafeteria, Andrew Cook, and I knew our lead guitarist Nate Patterson from back home where we went to church together. He was living in Lakeland, FL and we said to him, "Why don't you move home & start a band with us?"

As everyone was falling into their respective musical positions completing the Receiving End lineup, numerous fifth member lineup changes were to occur throughout the band's career. Heading into 2007, and the sophomore record, the new fifth member is Detroit, Michigan native Brian Southall, who was formerly in the band Boys Night Out- ex-tour mates of Receiving End, and how the acquaintance between Southall and TREOS was originally formed.

So like many band names that leave you with a question mark written on your face, what IS The Receiving End of Sirens? Alex Bars explains, "Andrew, our drummer always answers this question. He makes up some weird story every time he tells it, but I know the truth. The Receiving End of Sirens is basically an idea, how so many people can turn a blind eye to everything that is going on around them and right in their faces, go through life with a one-track mind. I guess it's hard not to be selfish, because by human nature I think you do things for yourself and I think he connected that reference with sirens going by no one really thinks where they are going, but they are helping people on the other end." Brown adds, "The message is basically learning to live outside of you. It is easy to get caught up in your daily routine and your own microcosm and thinking everything that goes on in your life is the world, a transcendentalist sort of way to go through 'I am the center of my own universe', me is all that matters. I don't think any of us believe that is true. What is going on outside of our little boxes every day is way more important."

Just like their name, their lyrics can invoke thought and some lines might seem familiar to Sirens' bookworms: "haunted and haunting is "Diary" by Chuck Palahniuk. It went along with the whole theme, haunting and haunted. I read a ton and a lot of things on the record are influenced by it, but no direct quotes or anything. There are definite Shakespeare references ('Then I Defy You, Stars'). Sirens' music is almost familiar to listeners, but the melodies seem to invoke that TREOS are more of an "influence" than a "sounds like" in today's music scene. Brown had influences from Brian Wilson's Smile album (the a capella segment at the end of 'Broadcast

Quality' & 'The Evidence') and Bars claims to have "ripped off Refused with the rhythm in 'The Evidence' with the three guitars".

The repeating message in the album "Between the Heart and the Synapse" is that of "this is the last night in my body". Its ambiguity, that of suicide or rebirth, begged me to ask Brown his intention with writing the line. "It's not about suicide, it is more about redemption and the idea of changing yourself, that your body is an immortal thing, and it's here permanently. I believe that there is always the power to change and there is a power in yourself to become a different person. I know with all of us and for me personally every day I'll be living my life and thinking there is so much that I need to change, like being unhappy with myself. Saying "this is the last night in my body" is more about moving on in your own life and leaving the person you were one day behind and becoming a new person. It goes along with 'Between the Heart and Synapse' meaning, the battle between your idealistic self and your actualized self, and moving from your actual to your ideal self."

'This is the last night in my body' wistfully chanted in 'Epilogue' closing the album, made an impact on both men. Brown says, "In 'Epilogue', (the quote) is a recurring theme of life, I think a person would be a liar if they were to say they are always happy with their life. To sing that live every day is a reminder to myself 'Okay, I wrote this for a reason, have I actually fallen through and changed anything?' Sometimes I get choked up when we play and see people that know the words of the song, knowing that they derive sort of the same meaning." Bars is also is touched by the song. "When we play now I think the song that still gets me more than the others is 'Epilogue', repeating 'this is the last night in my body' hits close to home. I can feel like I felt two years ago when we recorded that, I still feel those feelings very deeply and use that phrase and connect it to my life right now. Those lyrics mean a lot and I don't think that will ever change."

So many feelings and ideologies intertwined between choruses and lines of music, having to be organized, thought out and written out to make a full length album. When Bars jokingly referred to the recording process as "grueling, tedious, excruciating, boring" and then retracted it back saying "it was none of those things" with a smile, it is then you realize that a vision and idea such as "Between the Heart & Synapse" would seem impossible for us, the listeners, to ever write down verbally and musically, but for Receiving End, it's recording a certain point in their human lives. Brown says, "The CD is an emotional rollercoaster, so many different parts, ideas and challenges. Without Matt Squire, our producer, who we are also going to record the new record with, we wouldn't have conveyed the message and the feeling at all. He really understands the band. We connect so well personally and you can feel that in the recording he knows who we are. One of the biggest feelings I remember from being in the studio, was no matter how small the label or how many people bought it, the fact that our music was going to be archived on a CD that people could get eventually somehow. The craziest realization for all of us, you are in the studio and you realize, you are creating your own time capsule, you're capturing the present that is going to soon be in the past. It is going to be there forever and people can get their hands on it, our music is our art. To know that soon people can pick it up... we are doing what we love and we found a why to get by doing it, it is the best feeling on earth."

The Receiving End of Sirens were asked to headline Taste of Chaos 2007. Taste of Chaos not being unfamiliar to TREOS who were a part of it in 2006. Bars compared TOC with the $2 Bill Tour, "A lot of money behind it, a lot of fairly talented bands performing, a lot of competition and a lot of tall people. I think we are alluding to the fact that we are going in to record a new record which will be out in July 2007, writing and recording will be done this winter. What are fans to expect of the new album, and his thoughts of the past recording experience? Bars says, "I feel like we always kind of did want we wanted to do, and tried not to let anyone else influence or say 'hey you shouldn't do that kids won't like it' or 'this parts too this or this parts too that'. I think more than ever we're going into the new CD detached from any preconceived idea of what the next TREOS will sound like. A lot of the new songs are definitely in the forefront because it's where you are at, and where I'm at right now. I'm stoked that people can connect but we don't take it personally if maybe it's not for you. I'd rather make music that we all love and play everyday because you know when you tour every day straight you realize you have to love the songs you are playing." Brendan Brown explains, "A lot of the old lyrics are the furthest from transparent as possible. It's pretty hard to decipher and uncover because it's buried in metaphors and allegories. I don't think at that point I was really comfortable and myself and having people know what I felt, I'd rather make it sound cool than to have them not really know what it's really about, and if you do know you'd have to work pretty hard to figure it out. With the new lyrics I'm a little bit more comfortable or less scared to say them; a lot of the newer lyrics are extremely personal to me... that's why it's exciting to write. The new lyrics talk about the struggle with the music industry and feeling they look at you as money and the band looks at it as art, and those are two conflicting different things. For two years we have struggled making music and at the end of the day we are a dollar bill to people & we are just trying to make music we want to do."

As if on cue, Alex Bars says, "We are a dollar bill on a $2 dollar bill tour!"

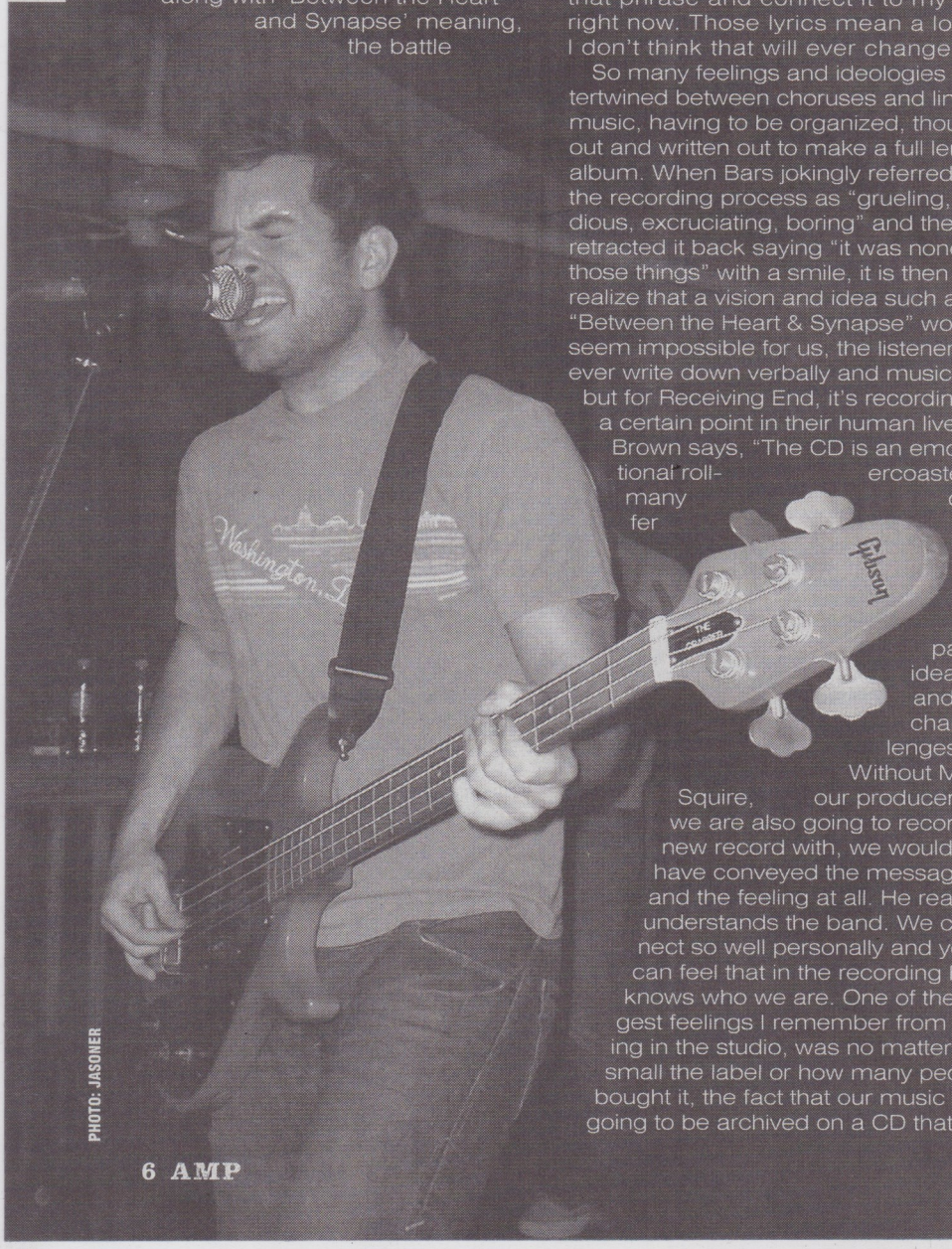


PHOTO: JASONER

Sal Canzonieri

Ranting, Raving and Rocking

This month's Rant:

You know what all the crap that is going on right now from the so-called government we have is all about? One word: Contempt. Everywhere you look you see the deepest of contempt for the regular American citizen, for the middle class. Nothing else explains these mentally ill decisions that are made other than these are people that are so far removed from everyday life in heir super rich privileged dream world where they hold all the rest of us with the highest of contempt for "bothering" them.

Openly, the Bush Administration continually spits in our faces with each passing day in Iraq, with each budget proposal, with each policy decision. They seriously don't want us around and could not give one shit about the average American at all. Arrogant contempt is the only way to describe the human monster that is "governing" us all now.

It's contempt for us that let them ignore all the warning that there was going to be an attack on this country on 9/11. They just couldn't be bothered to prevent it or even look into it.

It's contempt for us the let them ignore all the warnings that was going to be a disaster in New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina. They just could be bothered to act in a timely manner and handle the situation with efficiency and effectiveness. Its contempt for us that they picked a person to run FEMA that has no experience whatsoever, a horse show organizer of all things!

It's contempt for us that let them lie about Iraq: "WMDs" that didn't exist, let them LOSE 8 billion dollars of unaccounted for American taxpayer money there, let over 3,000 US Americans die needlessly there as sitting ducks to act as decoys, let them kill over 100,000 innocent men, women, and children there, let them lie and say it was done for democracy in Iraq when instead it was done to occupy the country and keep them from selling their oil on the open market, let them continue to stay there with no plan and no strategy to do anything of any real positive purpose there.

It's contempt for us that let Bush ignore the will of American citizens' votes that ushered in many new Democrats in protest of not only the war but congressional corruption, sending even more troops into Iraq when clearly American's want out of there. It's contempt for us that let them permit the huge number of newspapers and news stations and news magazines to become consolidated in the hands of only a few people who are staunch supports of everything this foul administration does. It's contempt for us that let the Bush administration ignore concerns about the environment. While evidence of man- made environmental damage mounts, the Bush team resists its implications. That has been especially true of its handling of the most serious of all environmental issues - global warming. First, the administration claimed that global warming was the work of liberal hysterics and had been discounted by "more sober scientists." Then, it admitted that it was happening but said there was no proof humans caused it, or could fix it. Retreat No. 3 was the White House discovery that, yes, indeed, some of the warming was due to human activity, and we should take steps, say, to reduce emissions, but those steps should be voluntary on the part of industry. It's contempt for us that revelations came out that a White House official and former energy lobbyist doctored reports on global warming to minimize links to greenhouse emissions. The dissembler-in-chief was Philip Cooney, chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality. By sheer coincidence, Mr. Cooney's previous job just happened to be as a lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute, the largest oil-industry trade group and staunch opponent to limits on greenhouse gasses.

It's contempt for us that the evil administration shows no care for human rights by keeping people in jails without charge for years, by permitting disgraces against humanity and democratic values such as the events at the torture at the Abu-Ghraib prison, by the U.S. veto of a UN Security Council resolution calling for the deployment of unarmed monitors to the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip demonstrates. The United States was the only country to vote against the resolution, which came before the Security Council after five days of tortuous negotiations that moderated the wording of the original draft. Still, this was not enough for the U.S., which vetoed its first UN Security Council resolution in five years.

It's contempt for us that lets the administration treat congress as an unequal part of government: It provides information to Congress grudgingly, if at all. It handles letters from lawmakers like junk mail, routinely tossing them aside without responding. It unabashedly evades the need for Senate confirmation of officials by resorting to recess appointments, even for key government posts; see, for example, the recent recess appointments of the top immigration official, the number two person at the Defense Department and half of the Federal Election Commission. It's contempt for us that let them fill up congress with the biggest crooks and greedy motherfuckers that has ever existed. People whose sole purpose there was to suck up as much taxpayer money as they could in all their fake pet projects that were earmarked onto laws at the last minute. It's contempt for us that they pass laws that they don't even read before signing or voting on.

It's contempt for us that let them give a huge multi-million dollar tax break to the wealthiest people of this country, while the average middle class citizen only got $100 to $300 a family! It's contempt for us that let George Bush's propose a disgusting 2008 budget that proposes to give the wealthiest families in this country billions of dollars in tax breaks while at the same time stop fund some of the most needed social programs for the poor and the middle class. Not only does it make many of Bush's tax cuts permanent, but it envisions a complete repeal of the Estate Tax, which mainly affects only those who are in the top two-tenths of the top one percent of the richest people in this country. The proposed savings from the cuts over the next decade are about $442 billion, or just slightly less than the amount of the annual defense budget (minus Iraq war expenses). If the Estate Tax were to be repealed completely, the estimated savings to just one family—the Walton family, the heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune—would be about $32.7 billion dollars over the next ten years. The proposed reductions to Medicaid over the same time frame? $28 billion. The Mars Candy heirs will receive about $11.7 billion in tax breaks. That's more than three times the amount Bush wants to cut from the VA budget ($3.4 billion) over the same time period. Says Matt Taibbi, of RollingStone.com: "Some other notable estimate estate tax breaks, versus corresponding cuts: Cox family (Cox cable TV) receives $9.7 billion tax break while education would get $1.5 billion in cuts; Nordstrom family (Nordstrom dept. stores) receives $826.5 million tax break while Community Service Block Grants would be eliminated, a $630 million cut; Ernest Gallo family (shitty wines) receives a $468.4 million cut while LIHEAP (heating oil to poor) would get a $420 million cut. And so on and so on. Sanders additionally pointed out that the family of former Exxon/Mobil CEO Lee Raymond, who received a $400 million retirement package, would receive about $164 million in tax breaks.

Compare that to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which Bush proposes be completely eliminated, at a savings of $108 million over ten years. The program sent one bag of groceries per month to 480,000 seniors, mothers and newborn children... they increase spending generally while cutting taxes and social programming. They commit taxpayers to giant subsidies of already Croseus-rich energy corporations, pharmaceutical companies and defense manufacturers while simultaneously cutting taxes on those who most directly benefit from those subsidies. Thus you're not cutting spending—you're just cutting spending on people who actually need the money." (see: http://www.alternet.org/story/48278). That doesn't show pure contempt for the American people? Why? BECAUSE IT IS YOUR TAX MONEY THAT THEY ARE GIVING AWAY TO THESE GREEDY ASSHOLES INSTEAD OF IT BEING USED FOR ACTUALLY HELPING YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS! It's one thing to say "oh, lets get rid of all forms of welfare, it is another thing to take that money and give it to the richest jerkoffs around! Speaking of rich jerkoff assholes: It's contempt for us that lets the Rockefeller family members out in the open say in the media and in their own autobiographies that they have plans to destroy our country, such as Nicholas Rockefeller personally assuring producer Aaron Russo there was going to be an "event" that would

Sal Canzonieri

trigger the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq ELEVEN MONTHS before 9/11 took place. Says Aarron: "He just said there's gonna be an event and out of that event we're gonna invade Afghanistan so we can run pipelines through the Caspian sea, we can go into Iraq to take the oil and establish bases in the middle east and to make the middle east part of the new world order and we're going to go after Venezuela - that's what's going to come out of this event. Eleven months to a year later that's what happened... he certainly knew that something was going to happen. In my relationships with some of these people I can tell you that it's as evil as it really gets - this is it - this is the game," stated Russo - also relating how members of the elite were routinely obsessed by creating a world identification society where people had to carry ID cards and prove who they were at all times. Also, worse and most damning of all, David Rockefeller in his Memoirs writes: "Some even believe we [the Rockefellers] are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States, characterizing my family and me as 'internationalists' and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world, if you will. If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it."

In "How the Bush Administration Hates America - Trained to Disassemble" (http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/4552/how_the_bush_administration_hates_america.html), Ken Sanders put it quite well: "It is clear that the Bush administration hates this country, those who defend it, and those who call it home. If they didn't hate America, they wouldn't take advantage of every opportunity to lie, cheat, and steal in furtherance of their and their cronies' selfish ends. If they didn't hate this country and those who defend it, they wouldn't have instituted a war through fraud and sent thousands of men and women off to be killed and wounded for a lie. If they didn't hate this country and its citizens, they wouldn't be so hell-bent to exploit our fears to curtail the very civil rights and liberties that purportedly distinguish us from the rest of the world. But they do hate America and they demonstrate their hatred through their lies, deceit, and manipulation."

What to do about it all? Well, one thing and one thing only can be done: Fire the Boss. Get in involved from the ground up in your local communities and change things from the bottom up. Push out the evil people by crowding up local politics so that your congressional representatives are forced to pay attention to their constituents, cause they will no longer have any choice or risk being voted out. The LOUDER the voice of the middle class, the more it will drown out the fat cats that were working to destroy us behind the scenes. They have contempt for us because we say nothing and do nothing about it. We let them step all over us and eventually kill our children by doing and saying nothing.

This month's Rave:

Gearhead Records, an independent record label located in Woodland, CA has opened their first retail store! Located at 39 5th St. Suite C, Woodland, CA 95695, the store features a mixture of independent music, local underground artists and unique alternative clothing, gifts and accessories. It is open noon to 7PM Tuesday through Saturday, and can be reached by calling 530-662-8277. The shop fills a much-needed void in the Sacramento Valley for a lifestyle store focusing on independent vinyl and CDS, and unique items generally only found by attending rock concerts or specialty events such as vintage car shows and motorcycle rallies.

Owner Michelle Haunold got the idea to open the store after moving her business from Davis, CA in September 2006. "I kept thinking of all the interesting music and merchandise I liked to shop for when I traveled and realized I could create a unique retail space once I moved my wholesale business to a larger warehouse space in Woodland" Haunold says. Sharing a warehouse with Sierra Mini Storage, the new location offered space to expand the wholesale operation and a room that presented the perfect site to open a retail store.

Prompted by the closing of Tower Records at the end of 2006, Haunold took the opportunity to create a positive change in the local retail environment by purchasing some of the racks and display units that were being discarded. Using her many contacts in the independent music world, and in the artist community of traditional/vintage car and motorcycle culture, Haunold started reaching out to see who would be interested in participating in the store. "People were shocked and excited by my suggestion" Haunold states. "They have all said I must be crazy or very brave to open a store in this economy. I think it's a mixture of both," she laughed.

The response was immediate due to the lack of retail options for independent record labels and artists. Small labels like Gearhead Records have fewer opportunities to position their releases in record stores due to the shrinking retail base. "There's simply fewer stores out there now," explains Haunold. "There's a lot of worry in the music industry that customers only want to order on-line or buy music digitally, and don't want the experience of browsing in a store. I shop online for convenience because so many times I can't find anything I want to buy. But I prefer to purchase something from a real person and support local businesses, and I'm sure there are many others out there like me" states Haunold.

Inspired by the unique selection of merchandise and gifts available at car shows like the Billet Proof Traditional Car Show that takes place each summer in Antioch, CA or the Midnight Mass Car Show sponsored by the Sacramento-based car club The Poor Boys, Haunold also realized that customers looking for independent music also generally liked to shop for unique clothing, house wares and other accessories only found at events like car and motorcycle shows and rock shows, so she included unique items such as hot-rod and chopper shirts, patches, stickers, belt buckles, silk-screened posters, hand-painted pin-striped purses, glassware, and key-chains to round out the inventory in the shop.

Michelle Haunold has been involved in the independent music world for 25 years, starting out as a college DJ and music critic and moving onto sales, distribution and finally starting her own record label in 2000. She continued to expand the business by designing unique t-shirts and merchandise for her artists and in 2002 created Gearhead Apparel.

Go on and check out the Gearhead Record store! You'll be glad you did! Support the spirit of independent music!

This month's Rocking:

The Priscillas (check out: http://www.thepriscillas.co.uk/) - from the UK come this quartet (Jenny, Guri, Kate and Hege) of punky power pop making leather jacketed, gum chewing bad girls. Their songs put to shame many new bands, with clear and crisp song writing in the vein of such great bands as the Buzzcocks and The Adverts, with hints of The Runaways too, plus amazing vocals and exiting guitar runs, and a rock steady backbeat from the bass and drums. There hasn't been a band like this in a really long time, where you can enjoying hearing them as well as looking at them perform their well crafted songs. Obviously many great bands have felt the same as me about them, since bands like The Damned, The Cramps, The Seeds, The Monks, and The 5.6.7.8s have all requested that The Priscillas open for them all over the UK. Fronted by American beauty Jen Brown, ex-singer for the Drag Triplets, both her unique voice and her striking stage persona are very appealing. The Priscillas are gathering a lot of attention in the UK by the sheer grace of their talent and the strength of the quality of their music, rather than the usual press agent baloney that most modern bands suffer from. You can go to: www.myspace.com/thepriscillas and listen to some of their cool music and not only that but you can see some of their really fantastic videos there too! If you remember when Punk Rock was fun and urgent back in the late 70s and early 80s, then this is the perfect band for you. They even have a song about Zombies!

That's it for this month! thanks!

Send review stuff to: Sal Canzonieri, PO Box 294, Whippany NJ 07981.
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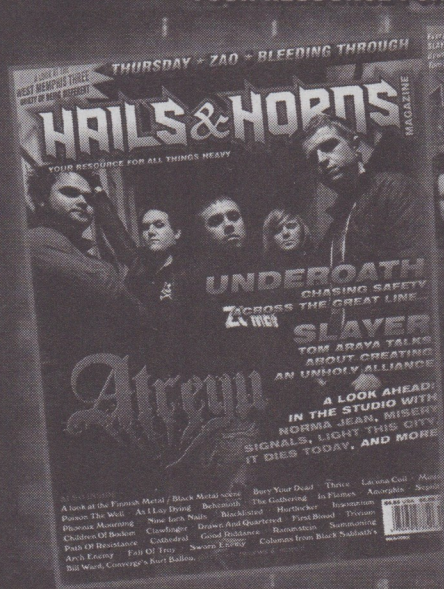
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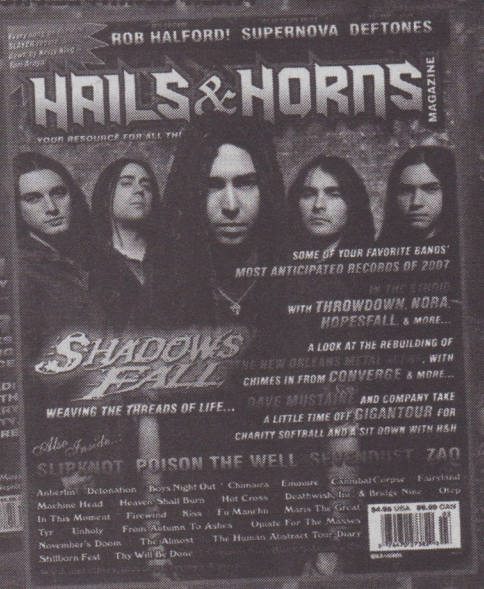
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Ska Returns: An Interview with

Big D and the Kids Table

By Kiran Mehendale / Photography By Joelle Andres

Let's take a trip back to 1997. This was the year that ska broke into the mainstream. You could find a ska band anywhere you looked in a magazine, on MTV and even on the radio. Less than Jake, Reel Big Fish, Goldfinger and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones were among the leaders of this ska boom. It's now 2007 and ska is pretty much hanging on life support. The ska boom from 1997 has been replaced with an emo trend full of Hot Topic mall kids who are only concerned with how they look rather than not worrying about what others think of them. You really have to search to find a good ska band. Fear not though because there's hope for all you true fans of ska music. A band has emerged from Boston, Massachusetts and is ready to take on the entire world regardless of this emo trend and whatever else has been put against them. This band is headlining a fresh new crop of ska bands. They're known as Big D and the Kids Table from Boston, Massachusetts, and you're bound to hear from them in 2007.

The band will be on top of the world in 2007 with four new releases including a split with Chinese punk sensation Brain Failure, a new full length entitled *Strictly Rude,* a dub CD called *Strictly Dub* (It doesn't take a genius to figure out that title) and a DVD release. The band also has a grueling tour schedule this year with slots opening up for two premier punk rock bands: The Dropkick Murphys in Europe and Anti-Flag in the states. The band will also be performing at punk rock's annual corporate circus: The Vans Warped Tour. I had a chance to talk to vocalist, Dave McWane, right before the band got on their European tour with Dropkick Murphys.

For new fans of your band, could you briefly explain how you guys started?
Basically, we all met in college because we really didn't have anything to do. We were all just a group of friends. We decided to play together because we were musicians. The reason we had horn players was because when the rhythm section played, the horn players got bored, so they just came down to practices. I met our original sax player because we were all sitting in a circle drinking, and it's really uncomfortable when you don't know anyone. It was deafeningly quiet. I lit a match and threw it at our old sax player, and it was supposed to go out and it lit on fire and basically everybody said: "We should stay away from this kid." I met the bass player by looking out my window and saw him beating up his roommate. The next day I was in the elevator with him, and I asked him about it and he said: "That kid didn't follow my rules." The next day was our first rehearsal. He walked in as the bass player and I literally said: "Oh, shit."

What are some of your major influences?
Overall as a band you could say the Specials, Operation Ivy and the Rudimentals. As far as punk goes, you could say Propagandhi. These days we've been listening to Lilly Allen, a new ska artist from England. My favorite group is this band called Melt Banana. They're a noiscore band. Their singer, Yasuko, is the coolest person I've ever seen on stage. Sometimes when we're on tour and I'm really tired or sick, I think about some of the Melt Banana shows I've gone to, and that really charges me up.

You guys switched over from Springman Records to Side One Dummy for this new full length. How did this signing come about?
It was just one of those things really. I was hanging out, and I got a call from Joe Sib and Joe Gittleman, former bass player of the Bosstones. They were interested in us and wanted to work with us. It was pretty weird. We were on the 2005 Warped Tour, and we've done everything



ourselves. Other than Mike Park from Asian Man Records and Springman, we've really done everything ourselves. We just did the DIY thing until it was ridiculous. Every morning on the tour, we were putting up flyers and somebody came up to us and said: "Kevin Lyman (founder of the Warped Tour) notices hardworking bands." I responded: "He probably would notice everyone except us," because that's pretty much our mentality. He actually took notice of us working hard. I guess he thought that was kind of cool and told the two Joes about us.

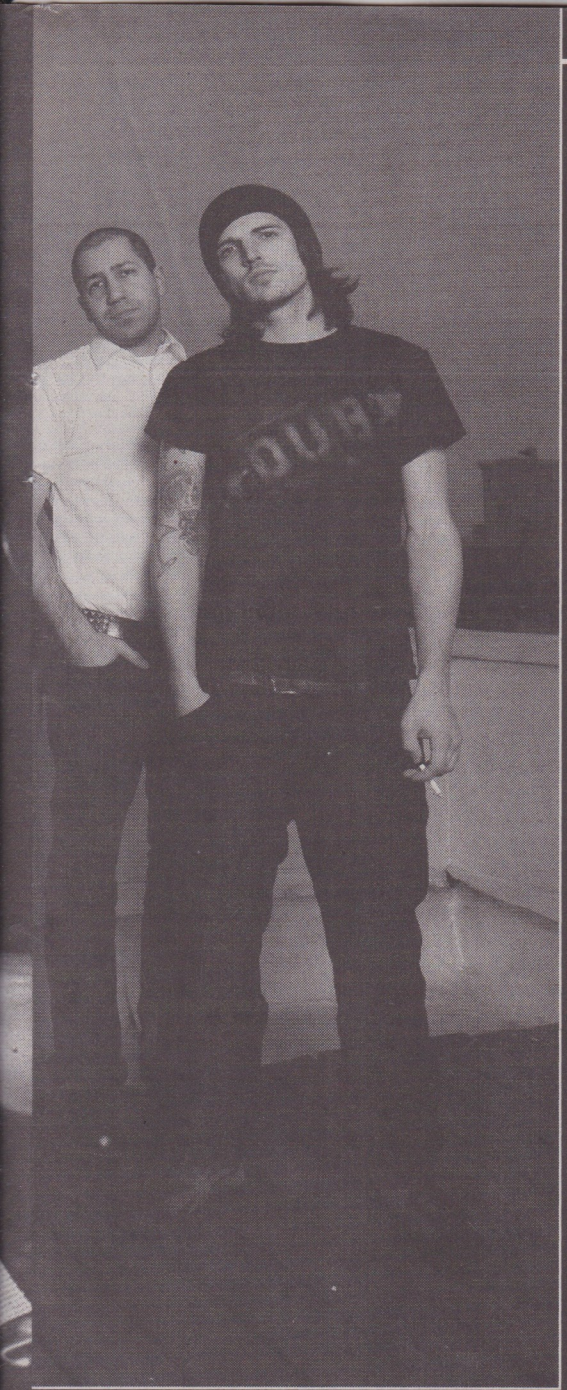
What has the experience with Side One Dummy been like so far?
It's been pretty amazing. No one has really been into our band. It's just been a tight crew of friends that go around and travel the United States and Europe with us. No one usually ever comes into our circle and cares. For the first time, Joe Gittleman came down to the studio and produced the new record. We were all on the same level with him. When he was playing with Slapshot and the Bosstones, I was at the shows, so there was that wave of hardcore that happened in Boston. He was playing then. We basically came from the same place and speak the same language. For the first time, it was fun to talk to someone who actually goes: "You're good" and we go: "Aww, shucks." It's really weird for us, but Side One has been awesome so far.

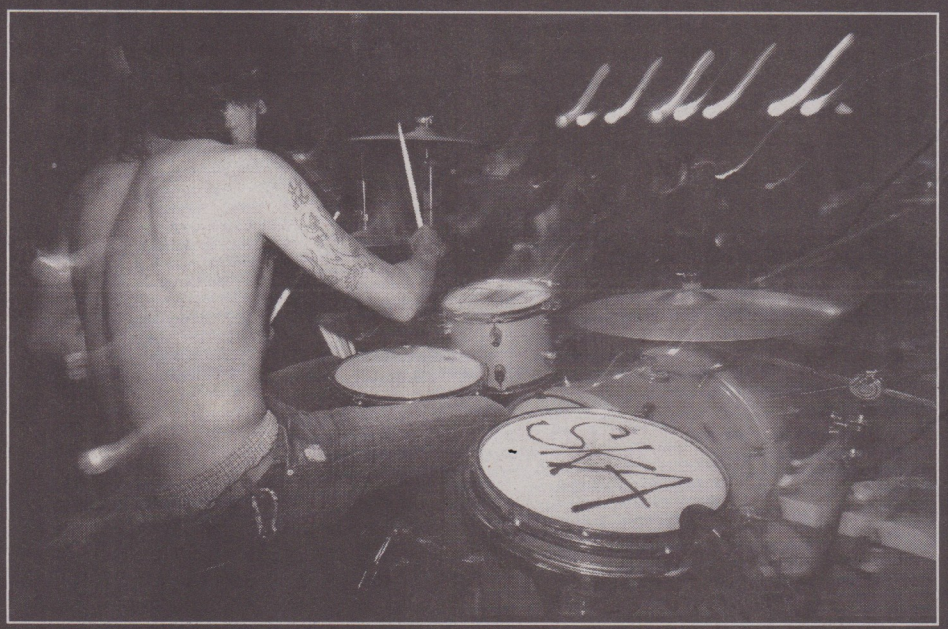
You guys have a new record coming out called *Strictly Rude*. How does the writing process on that record compare to your other full lengths?
Well, we got back from the 2005 Warped Tour and we decided we were going to put out a record called *Strictly Dub*. We had put out *How it Goes,* and we'd been listening to a lot of dub. We had just been writing those songs and having fun hanging out at this drop zone our guitar player and I used to skydive at. We just kept writing cool songs and Side One asked us about doing a record. We told them about this dub record we were doing, and they asked us to do a regular record. Enough time had passed that we decided to try it out. What happened, though, was that we wrote 40 songs. We were just writing constantly. They were pretty all kickass songs. We had way too many songs. Bad News Records from Japan was working with this band called Brain Failure and they asked us if we would do a 6 song split. It was actually the best news we could have heard. We decided to take all the punk songs and put them on the split. We actually wanted to do a *Strictly Thrash, Strictly Dub* and *Strictly Rude* record. We kind of got to do what we were hoping and now we got to do the *Strictly Rude* record. We'll have the *Strictly Dub* record coming out and those songs from the split will be an indication of what *Strictly Thrash* will sound like in the future. We basically wrote too many songs.

Were these records the first releases to feature Ryan O' Conner, your new sax player?
Yes, they were.

How did the addition of him help your band in general and on the split CD and full length?
It's funny that you ask that. He had toured with us in Europe before, so he wasn't crazy new. We had known him since we were 17-18 years old. He actually played in this band called Big Lick, who gave us our first show ever. Then, Chris Bush (our old sax player) couldn't make a couple of Europe tours, so then Ryan volunteered to join us. When you tour as much as we do, you basically give up the home, apartment and any relationship you might have usually fizzles out. Chris Bush kind of lost his big girlfriend because of the band. He got this new girlfriend he really liked, and he didn't want to lose her too. He basically came to us and said: "It's been nine good years. I think I'm going to move to Colorado and play jazz." He's living in San Francisco now. You just know when it's time for a member to leave. So basically, Ryan came in and Ryan's personality is really awesome and it's all about our friendship and everything is perfect.

What's the meaning behind the title of the full length: *Strictly Rude*
What's really funny when you play





Warped Tour and we played through the whole emo boom....

Yeah, you guys were the only ska band on the 2005 Warped Tour.
Other than some single dates, we were the only ska band on the entire tour that year. There are the screamo, emo, Britpop waves. I've seen countless bands change their styles to follow the waves. It was a term that just defined us as group of friends who really don't understand exactly what these groups are. We call them the "same driven schmucks." They're just trying to change as they go. When you're a musician, you can't really just change like that. You just are who you are. You play what you play, and that's how we describe ourselves. We're just a strictly rude ska band. So many funny people will come up to us at Warped Tour. It's usually the guitar player. For some reason, I've been dubbed as some psychologist for these bands. They'll come up to me after they're drunk and are like: "You're in a ska band dude. I used to love Sublime and ska man. This band I'm playing in it's kind of what I'm doing right now. It's kind of solo stuff right now." They're kind of selling out their band right now and not playing what they love. It's this whole weird relationship we have with these bands that find they want to bro down with us and tell us they're not into their band. Basically, it's our identity. We know who we are, and that's good enough for us.

Are you pleased with the final outcome, production wise, of the record?
The first two records, *Shot by Lammi* and *Good Luck,* were recorded at Big Sound by our friend John Lammi. The other three records were recorded at the Outpost. The recording sound on *Gypsy Hill* and *How it Goes* is probably on the same level, production wise, as the new record. The production on the new record just sounds different. The producer at the outpost has his own way of recording things and so does Joe. The first two records were just us learning how to record. We were John Lammi's first project. Our new record was the first time we got to really do everything what we wanted to. We didn't have a lot of time, only two weeks, which is considered a small amount on some standards. We were outrageously well-prepared. We basically practiced every day together for almost a year and a half to two years playing six hours a day. We went in the studio and played really tight and were happy with the final product.

How would you describe the lyrical content on this new record?
How It Goes was definitely the darkest record lyrically with songs like "Lax," Girls Against Drunk Bitches," "My Girlfriend's On Drugs," "New Nail Bed" and "Voice Alone." *Strictly Rude* is light years more positive than *How it Goes. How It Goes* was when we were most touring, never had been home, no places to crash and drinking crazy amounts. Every 20-something gets dumped by a girl. Everyone was doing that whole emo/screamo thing. I had a lot more anger. I was just saying "fuck it" to about everything. I was pretty pissed off when I wrote those songs. I got over everything when I wrote *Strictly Rude.* We were just so much tighter as a band and as friends. The new record is just more positive than *How it Goes.*

Were you in a better mindset when you were writing the songs for *Strictly Rude*?
I think something happens once you hit your mid-20s. When you're 22-23, you can go to a bar and get hammered every night. Around 25, you start looking around the bar and realize that you know exactly how the night is going to end in any choose your own adventure path. You start seeing things for what they really are. With *How It Goes,* I said: "Fuck, this is terrible." With *Strictly Rude,* I just started having lesser expectations. You get to enjoy more and not expect more. My mindset was the same except I just stopped looking around for what was good in life. I just realized that it's who you are and who you're with and you stop putting everything on such a pedestal. We never wrote songs for the masses and we just really wrote songs for each other. It just became a band for others that *Strictly Rude* was a time when we were running our mouths with new ideas and everyone was digging those ideas.



Who are some ska bands you think people should check out and also what do you think about the current state of the ska scene?
I think the Aggrolites are fucking phenomenal. Chris Murray is god's gift to the world. Do you know who he is?

What are some other things your fans should know about the new record?
It was the moment where we really played every day together. If this record sounds better to people, I would just say that I came up with this theory for the record. We're all working 8 hours a day at jobs. We have to at least match that or at least half of it for the band. I remember I was cleaning one of my boss' printers. I was getting paid $1.80 an hour. I'm working so hard for this guy. I need to work double that or at least a half of that when I get out of here. We realized that we do have to pay bills and we're exhausted when we get out of work but somehow, we need to take a shower, drink coffee or whatever and act like you're day starts now. We just pushed ourselves to play music and we wrote better songs. It became even more fun and challenging.

You guys also have a DVD coming out. When will that be released?
It's actually pretty hilarious. I write screenplays on the road and decided to film the last 2 years of us touring and stuff. I sent the tape to Chris Mitchell, an editing guy we met on the road, and then in three weeks, I go to Knoxville. I don't know exactly when it comes out but I'd say within the next 3 to 3.5 months. The DVD will basically be an instruction manual to anyone who hasn't gone on tour yet. There are so many little secrets we've picked up on the way. There's so many little things that it's going to be recording, touring, merchandising. We just want to let everyone know what it's like to be a touring band.

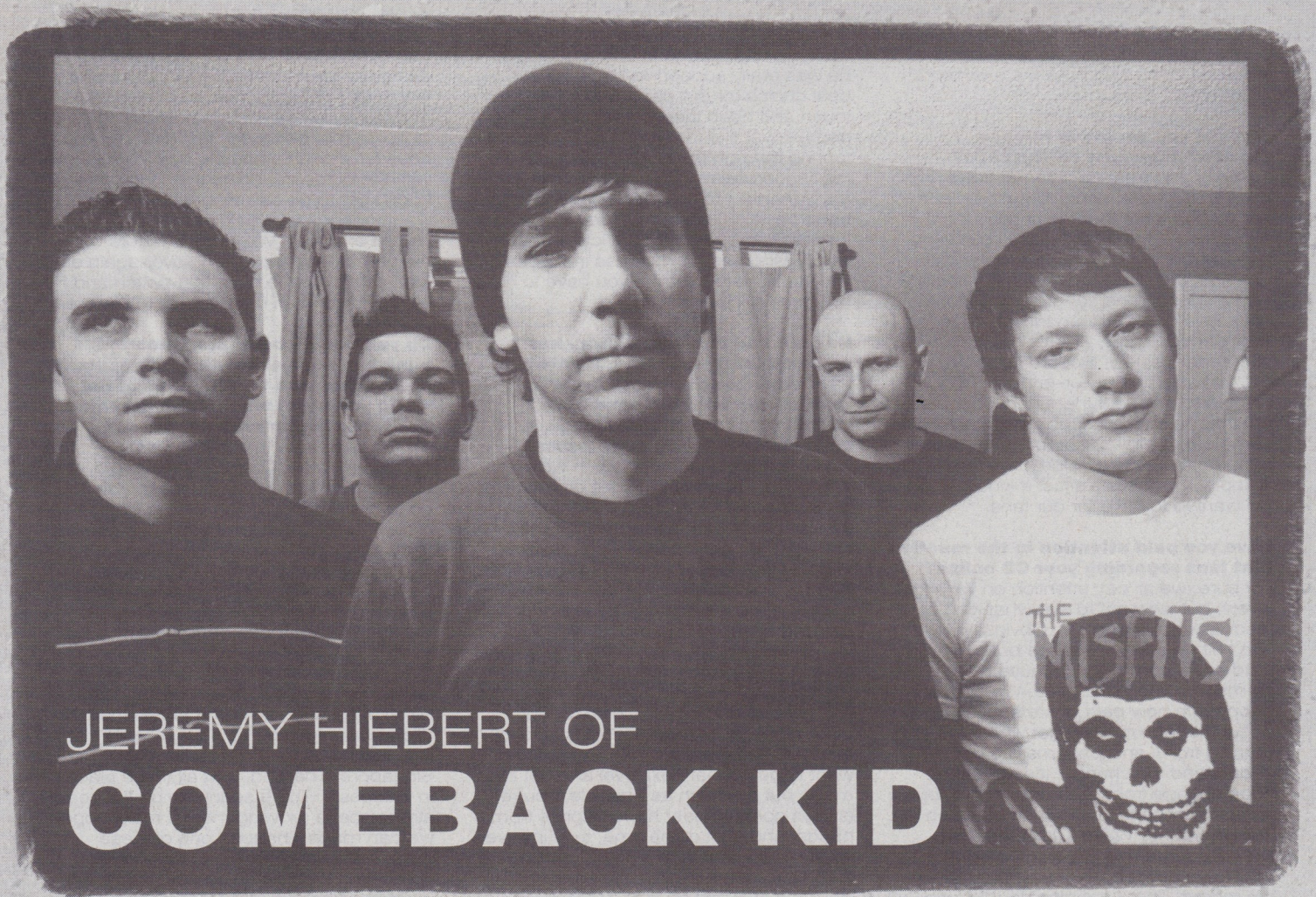
This year seems to be the year of Big D. You guys are set to open up for the Murphy's in Europe and then Anti-Flag here in the states. Do you think you guys will win over new fans with your insane touring schedule and live show?
I don't really know. I guess the bigger shows you play, the more fans you get. We'll get more fans that way. My theory is very clichê, but all the emo, screamo and vampire bands have been going on for so long. It just makes sense that the younger brothers, seeing their older brothers wear the makeup and eyeliner, will just decide not to do what their older brother did. They're just going to want to go back to slamming into music, rocking out and having a good time. It seems all of America has this Hollywood. pompous attitude. It can only last so long. We're just an honest band and things go in wave. Maybe real music will have a little time for itself.

I know you guys have an infamous Halloween show in the Boston area. What can we expect for this year's show?
This is our 11th year doing it. Last year, we had a band come out in sheets and play one of our songs and pretended to be us. The crowd thought it was us and they took out the sheets and it wasn't us. That was hilarious. The venue we usually play is changing their age limit to 21 and up. We really don't know what's going to happen.

What advice would you give to ska and punk bands in a scene where no one really wants to hear those types of bands?
Enjoy it. It's much more fun playing in a band where nobody really likes the style of music than if everybody was doing it. It's more fun that everybody is a screamo/emo band. It's more fun for us to play a metal show. Don't try to just play in your hometown. You really have to hit the road, break free and do your best to give a 100%. If you have a job, make sure you put into your band as much as you put into work.

What are some bands in Boston to check out?
Eyes Like Knives are a progressive band. Frank Smith is a good band to check out and even though A Wilhelm Scream isn't from Boston, they're the front burner band to check out. Boston is funny because it's kind of small, so you'll see all the local bands at the drinking holes and hangout places. You'll see Damone, a top rock band, hanging out with Big D and everybody in the scene is friends. There's no genre censorship.

Anything else?
I have a book coming out in March which is called *The Gypsi Mile*. It's basically stuff about our road adventures. I just decided to put it together to keep myself sane.... ↖



JEREMY HIEBERT OF COMEBACK KID

By Dan Gonyea (www.future-breed.com)

Many of Comeback Kid's fans felt the heavy blow a year back when their vocalist announced his departure and last tour with the band. Panicked messages on Myspace and emails from fans flooded the band begging the band to not break up. As CBK was asked to join Gorilla Biscuits during their reunion tour, ex-guitarist Andrew was now doing vocals, reminiscing on the days of his vocals in Figure Four. Fans debated if the new line-up would last. Comeback Kid's new album *Broadcasting* stands as a testament that they are back and better than ever. Jeremy Hiebert, guitarist of Comeback Kid, discussed with us their plans for showing the world Comeback Kid is alive and well.

What are you guys up to right now?
Right now we're doing well, just taking a little time off at home. Heading out on tour in a couple days. We're just enjoying a little down time right now for a bit!

How excited are you to get your new album out?
Very. It's been a long time in the works, from the studio and basement writing and recording it to doing all kinds of press stuff to lead up to it, it's awesome to have everything that has led up to it just finally come to the release we've been talking about for so long. It's good to get it out there.

Did you find this album difficult to approach since you had just gone through a lead vocalist change?
I'm not going to lie; I was nervous going into the record. There were several variables that were at play when we were writing for this record. As everyone knows, our old vocalist quit about a year ago. We had that transition. We did have some time though to work through it and get comfortable with it. When it came to the actual writing of the record, it has always kind of been Andrew and myself for the writing and arranging of the music. That part didn't really change for this record. We had a slightly different sound that ended up coming out of the record, but it still has that same Comeback Kid feel to it. There were some things that made us very nervous, but we were happy with how everything turned out in the end.

***Broadcasting* seems to have an angrier feel to it. The fast parts feel faster; the heavy parts feel a lot heavier. What spurred this progression?**
I think overall the record has a little more of a darker feel to it. I don't know if it's more like "pissed off," like some people have said..., Maybe it could be. The record is more dynamic. There is still that more melodic feel that we've always had, but there is that darker feel too. It's a little heavier than what we've done on previous records. I think it's just a lot more layered. We spent a lot more time while writing to rewrite parts and rework songs. As other

musicians say, you just learn from your past mistakes as a musician and move forward. I think we come out a lot more rounded out this time.

Why did you decide to release Broadcasting early on Myspace?
This day and age, the internet plays a huge role on delivering your music and just getting it out there. Our record got leaked, so it's not like it wasn't out there *already*, but we just wanted to get it out to so people could give it a listen. Initially we just put up one song, but we worked it out so we could stream the whole record. A lot of people say, "That's going to hurt your record sales!" Record sales are great, but that's not the be-or-end-all. We just wanted to get it out there and let people get their listen for a couple days before it came out. It allows kids to make up their mind on the record before they take a risk and buy it. I guess it's just a kind gesture we wanted to have for our fans.

Have you paid attention to the reaction that fans regarding your CD online?
For sure, we all pay attention on varying levels, but we want to see what kind of feedback is coming out. Obviously we can't hit up every message board and read every comment because there is so much going on at once. We are very happy with how people are speaking about the record. They get where we are coming from, and it seems like people understand the change. It's not like a huge change from record to record, but you can notice the difference between *Turn It Around*, *Wake The Dead*, and *Broadcasting*. There are some people who have never heard us before that like the record. There are also people who liked the last two records and like the new one. There are obviously kids who liked the first couple records and don't like the new record. And lately there has been this surge of kids who only like the first record now, which I find kind-of weird since we never really heard that much when the record first came out *laugh*. There are always those elitists that only like the demo or the first record. Those are the people in the minority. The overall feedback has been really good.

Why did Comeback Kid leave Facedown Records way back?
When we put out our first record, we sent out stuff to a lot of different labels. Facedown was the only label that really showed interest in what we were doing at the time. Other labels kind-of did, but not to the extent that Facedown did. We weren't the typical band that released records on Facedown because it's a Christian label, and we've never really set out to be a Christian band or anything. There have always been believers in the band, but that wasn't the reason for signing to Facedown. Also, the move to Victory did not have anything to do with any falling out of Facedown either. We had taken the band to a different label, and in order to get our music out there more with better distribution and stuff, it made sense. Jason at Facedown was really supportive of that decision. When he found out we were looking around at different labels, he was really supportive of us making the best choice for our band. We've been in touch and been friends ever since. He had us over like last year when we were touring through the area. We still have a really good relationship with him and are really thankful for his label. Sometimes a band has to move to a different label that just has more resources. Victory has a lot of resources. Sometimes in music, as much as I hate to say it, you have to make business decisions.

Has the bad publicity Victory has received lately regarding legal suits with other bands affected your relationship with the band at all?
I wouldn't say that much. A lot of the bands that are having these issues with them are a lot bigger than we are. Whatever it is--royalty issues or whatever is going on--it hasn't really affected us as a band. A lot of people will off-the-cuff say they don't believe in supporting Victory Records for whatever reasons they believe. We understand that, and support people making decisions based off their own experiences and morals and such. Overall, they are a record label, and they have business they need to do. We are a band, and we need a record label. I'm not trying to badmouth Victory or any other label, but a record label is kind-of that necessary evil a band needs if they want to get to that next level and get their music out as much as possible. You're always going to hear horror stories from bands, and a lot of the time, they involve misunderstandings. It's never going to be a 100% ideal situation.

What are your upcoming tour plans?
After our CD release shows here at home, we're going to be heading off to Europe. We're doing two weeks there, some of it on our own in the mainland and some in the UK with Alexisonfire. From that, we fly straight back to Toronto and start our North American tour for approximately six weeks in Canada and America. After that, we have plans in May with Sick Of It All. I think we just confirmed the Rise Against tour we're going to be doing in the summer as well. That's the general plan until early fall.

Do you guys have jobs that you go back to between tours?
The band is pretty much our primary focus.... It's hard to hold up a job when you're only around for two weeks here and a month here and a week there. That makes businesses not want to hire you. I had a job up until about three years ago, and the schedule just kept getting more and more busy. I haven't had a real job in like three years. Fortunately we've been able to make enough money on tour so that when we come home, we can pay our rent and not have to steal anything when we get home. We've been very fortunate for that! You don't want to get too set on it because you never know what's going to happen tomorrow.

What is your passion outside of music?
I live in a very cold city in Winnipeg so I can't do it right now, but I really like just riding my bike. I just recently got into it like last year. I bought a new mountain bike and fell in love with it. I almost didn't want to go on tour because I just loved going on rides for a couple hours a day. I am in love with the outdoors, doing that kind of thing. I don't get to go camping as much as I want to, and I love being around nature by myself and stuff. We close quarters with the same people over and over again on tour, so it's nice to have that switch and flip it around so I can be outdoors in the open.

Do you find it cool that hardcore and punk has been expanding its popularity so you guys can tour in areas of the world you never would have dreamed about touring before?
It's amazing how things have just happened lately. Outside of this band, I never would have even guessed how to go to like Europe, which we are going to for like the seventh time soon. I'm about thirty now, and I would have been lucky to get over there once if I wasn't in a band. Same with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and all those places. Obviously we don't have time to be touring and see everything there is out there to see all the time because of our tight schedules, but just to get to experience what we have so far, it's just an amazing experience. We've been getting so many emails from kids asking us to come to like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and all these places in Indonesia. There seems to be this really strong scene growing there. I really hope we can make it happen one of these days. It's always excited to be a part of something that is starting new, fresh, and exciting. When you tour in America, sure there's kids who are excited to see you, but there are also kids that are very jaded because they've been around it so much. I hope we can hit some of these new spots that are growing really fast.

What is the number one album that has influenced your life?
At this point in my life, there is this electronica thing called Air, and I am *all* about it right now. I love the songwriting on it. When I heard it the first time, I thought it was awesome, but since then, I've listened to it like a million times. I can't not listen to it. Itunes is playing it constantly when I'm on the computer. That's one album that I can't seem to get tired of.

Do you have any final comments or shout-outs to the readers?
Basically we just want to thank the people that have been behind us from day one. You know, there are always kids who come and go and get over it. The people who mean the most to us are the ones that like stuck behind us in our first tours and are still coming out. Even though they are older and may not go to shows anymore, they still somehow manage to come out to our shows and support. It's always great to see those old faces again. It breaks up the monotony of tour tour tour. Just a shout-out to our friends who have been behind us for so long!

RELIENT K

INTERVIEW WITH MARK THIESSEN

By Drew Ailes

I'm aware that Five Score and Seven Years Ago was originally slated to be released in November of 2006 but was pushed to March of 2007? What are the circumstances surrounding this change?
Well, I think Capitol wanted the album out in November because they wanted a fourth quarter release from us, and then I think they realized that they weren't going to have enough time to give us the push that they wanted, so they held it back. Unfortunately for us, we were under the gun the whole time that we were doing the record. A lot of stress was incurred from the deadlines that were given to us. It was kind of a big bummer when we found out the record was being pushed back to March. We were just kind of like, "why did we work so hard," but it's just what happens.

I bet you're glad now that you're not still pushing to finish things.
Yeah. The other thing that came from it was the fact that we've never had an album leak before. This one leaked seven weeks before it came out. So, pretty easy to attribute that to the fact that it was ready to be put out in November but then it got pushed back to March.

I can imagine that'd be pretty frustrating for you.
Right.

Now with the delayed release, this album has become the record that you've spent the longest time creating. But as you've told me, there was a lot of rush to get things done. I'm just speaking in terms of length between releases.
Yeah, definitely. And again, that comes from the push, because if it would've come out in November it would've been two years. But we put out an EP in the year between, so, it kind of kept up with us. Every year we try to get something new out there. Unfortunately, I guess 2006 was vacant for that. It's a little embarrassing for us because as band members, we're huge music fans. We're the kind of guys who go out and buy records on release days, so when our favorite bands, like for instance, Jimmy Eat World, used to take forever to put out a record and we said that we'd never do that. We wanted to put one out every year or every year and a half. Unfortunately, the powers that be prevented us from doing that this time.

That's cool that you guys have made a conscious effort to not keep your fans waiting for new material. So from your personal perception, how does the material on this new album differ from the last record?
I've actually heard from people, "oh,



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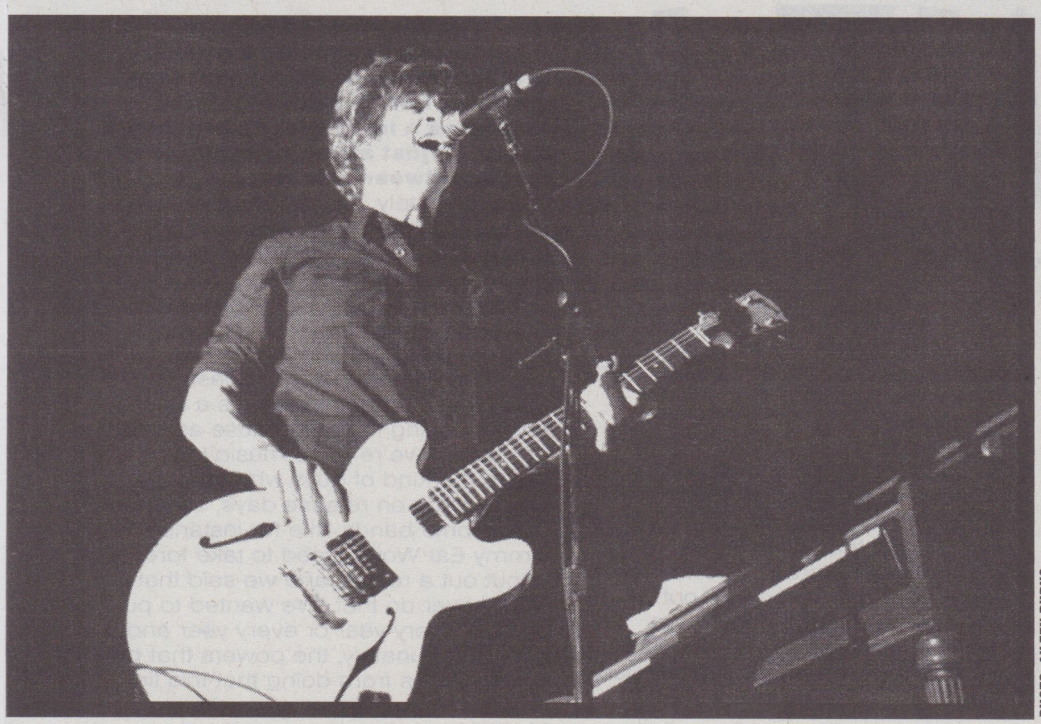


PHOTO: AILEEN BURNS



PHOTO: AILEEN BURNS

it totally wasn't what I was expecting." I don't know if they were looking for this Blink 182-esque polished, pop-punk record. But for me, I feel like this record is just a continuation of where we were going with the last one. Just kind of keep it going in the right direction, hopefully. I guess it's a little more, I don't know, thoughtful I think than our other songs. I think we've definitely probably put a little more work into this batch than I have in the past.

The new record marks Jon Schneck as well as John Warne's debut with Relient K. How has having them in the band changed the dynamics of the songwriting process, if any?
It's funny, because "if any" is the right way to say it. John Warne was in the band before the fourth record came out. He didn't play on the last record, but he was in the band before it came out. He joined up in that limbo period, basically what we're in right now. Jon Schneck joined the band two months after it came out. So basically, these guys were in the band the whole time as far as we're concerned, except for the actual playing on the record. So to me, they've been in the bands forever. It's not anything different. I've actually been asked the question before and I've been like, "oh, I guess they are new..." You know? But they didn't change anything. They're awesome. They're talented guys, they played great on the record, and for the last two years or so they've been great to hang out with on the road. I kind of just don't notice, and I guess that's a good thing. If you did notice, it would probably be because something was awry.

Mentioning other new names you've worked with - Howard Benson. How was working with such a well-known and prolific producer differ from working with Mark Townsend in the earlier days?
You know, Mark, he still works on a couple tracks on this record. He's basically like family. I view him as a brother/father figure, and he views me as a son. When we go to work on a record together it's definitely collaboration. He'll tell me if something is bad or whatever, but at the same time, he also lets me have a lot of control. Going in to do the record with Howard, I came in with the mindset that I wanted to be really pliable. I was going to check any sort of ego - which I don't really have much of one anyway, but I was going to check the pride at the door and let him destroy the songs, so to speak, just to see if that's the difference. If that's going to take us to the next level or whatever. As it turned out, he didn't really need to do too much. It's pretty easy working with him. He liked a lot of the arrangements, took some things out here and there, simplified things...but all-in-all, we worked really well together. He didn't take out my favorite part of any song or anything.

Hah, that's good. Kind of ties in with my other question, which you already sort of answered. I was going to ask about keeping Mark Townsend in the recording process, but you seem to have already answered that, given your admiration for the guy.
[laughs] He's awesome, yeah.

Now, I've read in other interviews and noticed in the actual lyrics that there aren't a lot of very direct messages regarding Relient K's faith and devotion to Christianity - although the band is known for their faith in certain circles. In the interview, I believe you cited that you have difficulties in using Christian-specific terms in lyrics, fearful that it might sound cheesy. Have you ever been criticized for not being more outwardly vocal about your faith?
[laughs] Yeah, you just opened the can of words. Basically, a lot of kids hated that quote. I don't know if it came out completely correctly. I just want to make clear that I'm very serious about what I believe in. I'm not just going to throw God or Jesus' name into a song just so that it's a Christian song - just for the sake of writing a song. If I'm going to put that in there, I'm going to obviously want to stand behind it. There's this fine line of whether or not people are going to interpret this as trying to make a buck off of God. That sort of thing. It's a sticky situation. As far as everything else goes, we do like to write about our faith but a lot of people are like, "well, you guys don't sound very preachy, are you trying to appeal to certain people?" The answer is "no", the reason we're not preachy is because if you sit down with me and have a cup of coffee, I'm not going to start pushing you into the Bible. We're



PHOTO: BEN WATTS

just being true to ourselves. At the same time, we're not afraid to talk about it or to say, "sure, call us a Christian band, we don't care." We want to make sure people don't think that we're embarrassed or ever shy away from what we believe. It's really important to us.

Having begun from such a young and simple background, do you have any ethical qualms touring with some of the large stadium-selling bands that you've hit the road with in the past? Maybe with a band that hasn't spent the same time on the road that you have?
Yeah, well, you know what? The music industry is funny. I can sit back and say, "oh, look at that band, they've only been a band for a year and they've already sold three-million records," like Panic! at the Disco, or something like that. But man, they did the right thing at the right time, and congratulations to them. I honestly, maybe yeah, we've put in seven years of work to get where we are, but I still feel like, you know, I haven't had a day job. I feel spoiled that this is what I get to do for a living. I'm never going to be that kind of, "I worked so hard to get where I am," that sort of thing, because I haven't worked hard enough. I know a lot of the bands out there that have been doing it just as long as us, and they work as hard as us, and they don't get the break. They probably look at us like one of those bands that has got it too easy.

So are there any bands that you guys would completely refuse to tour with, regardless of the opportunity it could present?
There are definitely bands out there that we would say "no" to. We try to be really careful. We're not going to go out on tour just because it might sell us more records or something like that. We're not hippies or anything, but we definitely love what we do and we do this to have fun with it. We're not necessarily a money-minded band, even though we're conscious of it. We don't do things only because it benefits our wallets.

Through the years, the band has creatively ventured into literary territory with The Complex Infrastructure Known as the Female Mind and even made a few cartoons now. I'm curious as to if there are any future plans to do explore any other unconventional mediums or perhaps author other books?
Well, the book thing is kind of a fluke. We don't really like that and we don't like to talk about it. Reason being, the publishing company, when they talked to us about it, we thought it was going to be something completely different than what it turned out to be. They hired a writer to write the whole thing and kind of put our names on it. It's kind of a fishy thing. But whatever, it's over. Sometimes things happen that suck and that's one of them, as far as we're concerned. But the cartoons and stuff, when the band started out, we were writing a lot of goofy songs. We don't write as much tongue-in-cheek sort of goofy cover songs anymore, but I'm still kind of like that as a person. The Flash animation stuff that we're working on is kind of an outlet for that twelve year old personality that I have. And who knows, we might end up working on stuff. We like trying to do stuff that most bands from our background don't do - try to find new little things to do all the time.

You and Dave both have solo and side projects, and from what I've read, John Warne animates the Woodland Forest cartoons. What do Jon Schneck and Matt Hoopes have their hands in as far as extra activities?
Jon Schneck does all our Podcasts and stuff. He does a really good job with those, too. He works really hard on the editing and things like that. Matt Hoopes, he does a lot of stuff. He's actually about to have a baby in the next week or two. He's a golfer, and he lives in Nashville and will end up playing guitar on people's records and stuff like that. He'll do some studio work. He just bought a pedal steel, but I don't think he's got it yet. He's going to try to learn how to play the pedal steel. We used one on a song called "Faking My Own Suicide" to make it sound country a little bit.

Does the band still keep up with Brian Pittman? Have you had a chance to hear his band, Inhale Exhale, on Solid State records?
Yeah, absolutely. We see him all the time. Our last tour, the Nintendo Fusion tour we were on, we played in the same city as Brian's band about five times. We always found an opportunity to hang out. I actually got to go see Brian's band play for the first time in Portland, Oregon, when we were playing up there. So that was really cool. Him and me are big Cleveland Cavaliers fans, like, almost obsessed. We'll go to games together. Last time I saw him, I think we were at a bar watching a game, so that was cool.

Lastly, what does 2007 hold for Relient K in the new year, other than the release of the new record?
It's funny, everybody always kind of looks at what we do as this crazy job, where everything is different all the time. But it's kind of a broader version of the nine to five. We don't go and sit in a cubicle every day, but again, we play to the same cities every year in the same venues. So I can accurately say it's probably just going to be more of the same this year. A couple different things, like, we've never played Conan O'Brien before. We get to do that March 2nd. It's little stuff like that. But we're just going to tour and try and see if we can get Matt home to see his new baby every once and a while, and just continue to have a good time with it.

RUSS RANKIN

INVISIBLE PEOPLE

"Sorry; I didn't mean to ignore you but I guess I was." She is the cashier girl with braces and too much eye shadow. I am in the checkout line at the upscale market deli around the corner from the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma, CA. All around me the privileged are shopping and conversing about whatever it is you talk to complete strangers about when you have absolutely everything you could ever want. It's a chilly dusk in February and I have my hoodie and jacket zipped up around me. My bulky tour backpack is slung over my back as I wade through the aisles of overpriced commodity. I have what the soldiers in the film "Platoon" called 'The Thousand Yard Stare.' I haven't shaved in a week. As I move among them it seems they don't notice me – as if I were a box of paper towels or some sterile shelf of twelve dollar pasta sauce.

Why is it so easy to slip into anonymity out here? I am everywhere and nowhere all at the same time. Forcing my way into the ordered existence of towns and cities day in and day out. No doubt producing some subtle rift in the rhythm and flow of it all. I envision residents of these places looking around apprehensively; as though they are able to palpably feel a disturbance in the daily stream of that city's life but are unable to pinpoint exactly where it's coming from. Suddenly, for one day, there's an extra person in line at the café, keeping you there 3-5 minutes longer than usual or the spot you always park your car is suddenly and inexplicably occupied by a dirty 15 passenger van with a trailer.

"Are you guys a band?"

"Well... yeah we are."

"Oh cool! We don't get too many famous people around here. What's your band called? I'm going to tell my son/daughter y'all came in here."

Then always with the blank look when the band's name fails to resonate. I usually opt for the "you've probably never heard of us" approach. It saves everyone involved in the conversation an awkward moment or two and really, when you get right down to it, isn't that the default mission statement of each day we spend on this wretched earth: avoiding those unnecessary awkward moments?

Our existence out here is a hybrid of tourism and indigence. Homeless people with a vehicle and per diems. Days without sleep or any of the casual comforts of home. Mind-numbing drives and tedious sound checks all to stumble out on stage and throw down to a handful of only marginally interested people. It's not supposed to be this way but it is and there's little or no room to negotiate the terms. The fickle landscape of this entire milieu has weathered a wholesale shift in taste and tone which is nothing if not cruel and unforgiving in it's cyclical progression. People like myself can either forge ahead, resigned to the sobering reality of our limited appeal or hang up our Rand McNally road atlases and tour laminates for a more acceptable existence somewhere between society's clearly defined lines of what a person ought to be doing with themselves at this age. Call it tapping out or call it living to fight another day. There is no more history or respect for what came before. The whole damn thing has become a watered down commodity with all the shallow pressures of the artistically bankrupt cultural marketplace brought to bear upon it.

And so we soldier on through the fading pastures settling for smaller and smaller pieces of the dubious prize; occasionally comforted and secure in the surety that we are in the right and that people like us will one day be vindicated and respected for the honesty and weight of what we do. There is no danger of recognition by the strangers we inflict ourselves upon out here. To them we are aliens. They are cautious; perhaps suspecting that we may bring disease and infirmity to their placid municipality. They treat us with an acrid blend of mistrust and passing curiosity; cataloguing the interaction in the rear of their subconscious in case the 4th of July barbeque starts to get dull.

"Had a band in from California a few months ago. All covered in tattoos and what not."

It's not really a memory. It's incidental; like stepping on a thumb tack. We are still very much invisible. The migrating ghosts of the beer soaked stages and worn down truck stops which pepper this Great Nation. You will recall the idea of us but you will never quite be able to remember any of the details. Like déjà vu or a particularly vivid dream. For an explosive instant the moment is as real as anything and then, just as quickly, it recedes into the brain's "lost & found" department where it will steadily sink into that tepid sea of "almosts" and near misses.

The heaviest thing on God's Green Earth is the final acceptance that we could cease to do this and the machinery would hum right along without even the slightest pause or solemn reverence. Put out to pasture to catch flies in our golden years while our souls are catching dust in the record store bins. After all the frantic scurrying around, losing sleep over sound scans and worrying about which band we're supposedly "friends" with might be growing more popular than us it is brutally apparent that in the end it has all amounted to nothing. Nobody cares. We are left to consider just what it was we thought was so important for all those years and which ultimately more worthwhile endeavors we could have spent our time and energy on. The more well-adjusted among us will invariably land on our feet, rich with the memories of a life spent adventuring while the more fragile will sink into varying epochs of depression and regret – certain that their life is over and there must surely be no point in carrying on any longer. Screaming invisible.

Anti – Community

I see a group of three teenaged girls walking down Mission Street. They are obviously friends. They are each talking animatedly into the phones glued to their ears but not talking to each other.

I'm at the movies. The previews were preceded by an urgent plea for everyone to silence their cell phones. It was clever, well delivered and very much to the point. It would be difficult to miss the purpose of it yet sure enough, maybe 20 minutes into the film, somebody's

RUSS RANKIN

phone starts ringing. Initially I give the person the benefit of the doubt; we've all forgotten to silence our phones at the theater at least once. Surely they'll quickly grab the thing and shut it off out of respect for their fellow movie goers – all of whom have dropped a good $8 for the experience but then the most incredible thing happens.

"Hello? Hey! What's up? Nothing; I'm in a movie."

You gotta be fucking kidding me. For reals? REALLY?!?!

And it seems to be happening more and more frequently. What is going on?

Now I'd like to consider myself a fairly modern guy. I like technology. I'm excited at the prospects for the advancement of human life and the ability we all have to communicate and share our lives with more and more people all over the world. I believe at some point that it will unite our planet and create an idyllic global community where we will hopefully be able to subvert human scourges like war, poverty and racism and instead focus on enlightenment and human edification. The problem seems to be that all of this great technology is outpacing the sane and considerate regulation which ought to be accompanying it.

Maybe we have become so accidentally anti-social as a result of carrying on more and more of our "relationships" through online communities, instant messaging and texting that we are beginning to forget how to act when we actually find ourselves in close proximity to our fellow humans. We appear to be losing a grip on even the basest rules of courtesy and conduct with regard to actual human interaction. I see it getting worse in the short term – not better.

All cell phone providers ought to begin carrying software in their phones which will deliver a painful shock to the user anytime they answer their phone in a movie, on an airplane or during a hockey game. Also, anytime their voice rises above a certain, pre-determined decibel level when speaking on their phone in a populated, public area. Nobody wants to listen in on your conversation – it's one of those situations where it's probably best NOT to share. Also (and I'll tell on myself here – I am guilty of this) nobody ought to be able to talk on their cell phones while operating a motor vehicle unless they're a member of law enforcement. It's a small miracle that more of us don't kill each other on the roads from driving while impaired by this obvious distraction.

Another shock-delivering cell phone offense is the "Talking On the Phone While Ordering Anything In A Retail Environment." This includes coffee shops, movie lines, clothing stores, food outlets, etc. Anyone who has had to work in retail in the age of cell phones will tell you it is their least favorite thing. Have enough decency to end your conversation long enough to speak clearly, politely AND directly to the person who's job it is to serve you. If you can't even drum up that much courtesy then you deserve the razor blade they shove into your caramel apple at the food court. You fucking self-important waste.

I hope the day is coming when movie theaters will all be equipped with cell signal jamming apparatus. Then it won't matter if any of you geniuses leave your phone ringers on. I swear – it is so baffling to me. If any of you who really believe you ought to be able to answer your phone in movies and carry on a conversation are reading this please email me (russ@onlycrime.com) and explain yourself. I mean, they show the gigantic "PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES NOW!" message before the movie; what do these people think?

"Well, that must be for everyone else. I'm sure they couldn't possibly mean ME."

Like which part of "SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES NOW!" is unclear? And the best is when it's someone RIGHT behind me and I turn around and whisper something to them like "are you serious?" and they actually look annoyed. At ME! For interrupting their oh so important call. Who ARE these people?

We are forgetting how to act in public. We are rude, indignant and crass and nobody is calling us on it. Even the Japanese, who are ALWAYS on their phones, seem to be able to carry on with it in a quiet, subtle and respectful manner and they wouldn't dare answer their phones in a movie.

It's definitely time for someone to invent the signal jamming equipment for theaters, retail stores and airplanes. Let's start thinking of cell phone conversations with our friends and families in terms of quality rather than quantity. Nobody really needs a running commentary of your trip to the mall or a detailed account of your stupid, inebriated activities at that one guy's house last night. I don't know about you guys but there's something a little awkward and inappropriate about involuntarily eavesdropping on someone's conversation solely by virtue of proximity. I find myself wanting to plug my ears and do the "lalalalalalala" thing to spare myself having to hear about how TOTALLY WASTED you were and OH MY GOD and you were like SOOOOOO fucked up and OH MY GOD and...

Yeah. Someone just shoot me.

We need to have the good sense to be able to regulate ourselves. Just use your fucking brains. Have a little courtesy and try to actually enjoy the moments of human interaction and real community we still have which technology is rendering more and more infrequent. Unless we can reverse this social epidemic every shred of "community" we have will be relegated to sitting in our homes and apartments glued to a computer screen filled with instant message chat boxes and we will never again actually see or talk to another human being. It could happen if we don't start to straighten ourselves out.

If you've made it this far into the column do me a favor: think about your demeanor in regards to cell phone usage in public. Would you be eligible for a painful shock under my proposed guidelines? Have you ever answered your phone in a crowded theater and actually carried on with a conversation? And if so WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU!! STOP IT!!

Cell phones are great. They serve a purpose. Parents can keep track of their kids and vice versa. Travelers can contact the people they are supposed to meet. If I'm late for a commitment I can call and let someone know. If we have car trouble we can call AAA, etc.

They are NOT, however, for using 24 hours a fucking day to inflict your inane life on everyone within earshot.

You pointless excuse for a human being.

SMALL TOWN ROOTS EXPLORED:

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM BARRY OF AVAIL

By Kiran Mehendale / Photography By Travis Travel

Punk rock has always been about rebelling against authority, doing your own thing on your own terms and having one hell of a good time while doing it. What happens then when a renowned figure in the punk scene decides to branch off from the punk rock he loves and try something new? Others musicians like Greg Graffin of Bad Religion and Chuck Ragan of Hot Water Music have done this and have succeeded. Did this artist succeed like Graffin and Ragan?

Tim Barry has not only succeeded like the two afformentioned artists, but he has passed with flying colors. His solo full length, *Rivana Junction*, continues to surprise both punk and non-punk fans alike. Influences like Woody Guthrie and Emmy Lou Harris dominate this solo release and Barry plans to tour like a madman hoping that people will dig his honest, intimate music. I had a chance to catch up with Barry while in Washington preparing for a show with Avail.

How did you solo project begin in the first place?

It was actually an accident. I just had this whole backlog of songs that I was messing around with. One day I was hanging out with my buddy Lance, who has a studio down the street from my place. I just decided that I should record some of these songs I've been working on. I guess I underestimate Avail. On our Website, it has this news thing that said I recorded 8 songs and anyone who wanted them, just send me money, and I'll burn them on a CD-R. I just started getting order after order for these songs. I didn't think anyone actually looked at our site. This is kind of fun making this music. A German Record label put those songs out, and I called it The Laurel Street Demo. I had a bunch of more songs out, though, and said: "What the hell, I should put out a full length!" That became this new record, *Rivana Junction,* It really was an accident but an accident I've had so much fun doing. I'm going to keep doing it until I fucking die. My sister plays with me and my buddy Josh plays with me, and we plan to tour all fucking year on this record.

How did the deal with Suburban Home Records come about?

I talked to a handful of record labels. I got a few calls and contacted a few. I talked to Virgil with Suburban home, and he was so easy to talk to. I double checked too. I talked to the guys in Drag The River, who are also on that label. They said nothing but great things about him. I liked the way he enjoyed the music for what it was. It's also an independent record label and works on a grassroots level which is something I felt comfortable in dealing with. I'm not really prepared to go on a big stage with this music. I just want to play in people's basements and in a dive bar. The record label worked more with my vision. There were no contracts, none of that bullshit. We just went ahead and did it.

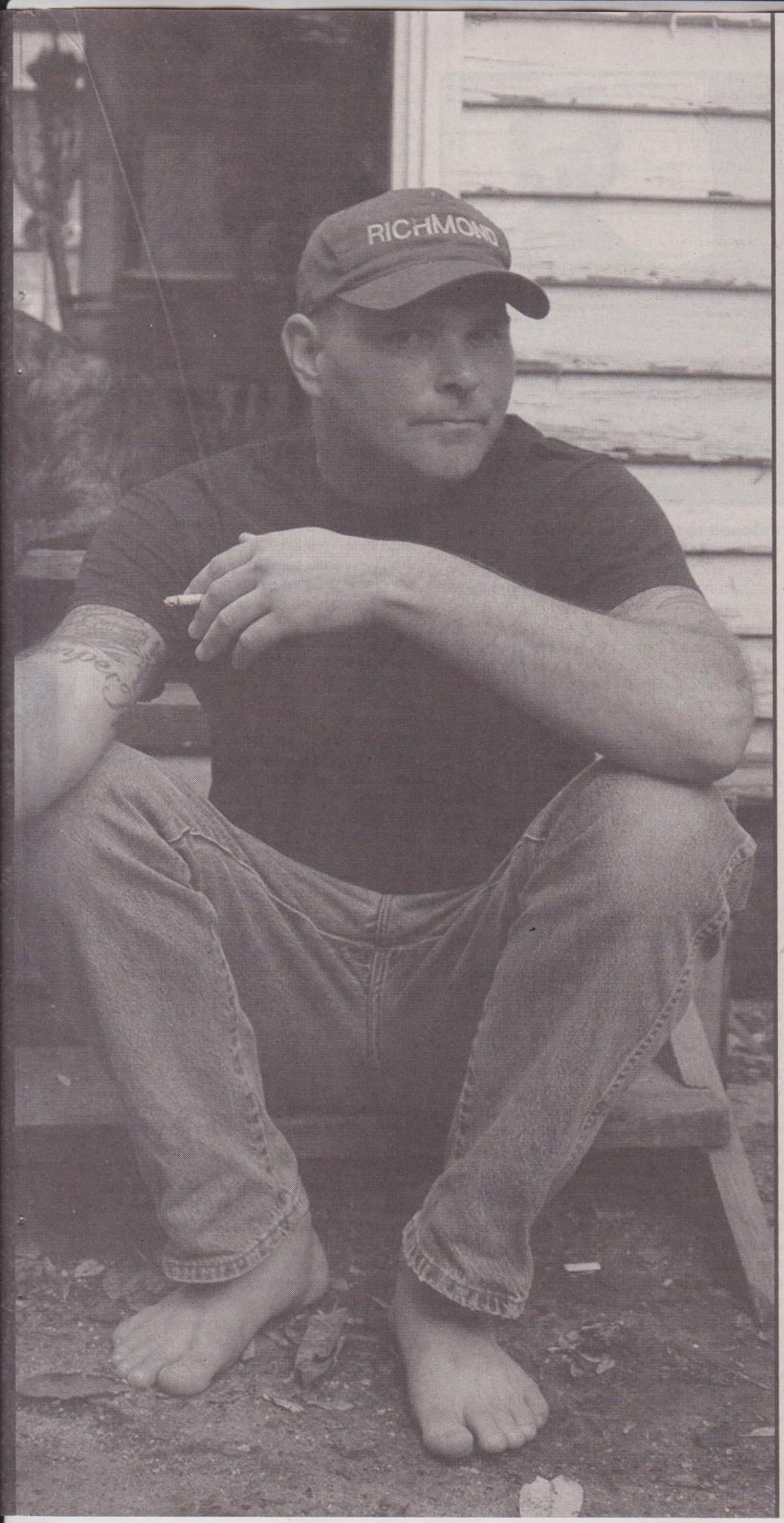
So it's basically like working with a family member?

I think what happens is when you're in a situation like that, you become a family member. We've been through a lot together. A typical person doesn't know how the fuck to put out a book, magazine or a record. I have to make this clear. It's a real pain in the ass. The deadline is the worst. The process is such a pain in the ass. You go through trials and tribulations, and you get to know a lot about yourself and the record label in the process.

What events, both political and personal, was your inspiration for this record?

I don't really know because I write on a stream of consciousness level. I don't really sit down and think of topics to write about. I just sort of write a song, and the lyrics sort of flow out. I don't spend a lot of time on the lyrics. I just know a song works when I'm just singing a song to myself, strumming the guitar and I don't have to write the lyrics. They all just start shooting out. The songs have really specific notions behind them at times but generally, everything flows out. The reason the record is called *Rivana Junction* is because there's a train line called Rivana right by this hill where I live.





That's where I seem to write most of my songs.

Did you write most of your songs for Avail there too?
I write a shit ton of songs in that area, yes.

What were some of your musical influences for the record, both punk rock and non-punk rock?
The truth is that I haven't been listening to that much punk for almost 10 years. It's not to say I don't love it. When I say I don't listen to it, I mean that I don't play it at home a whole lot. I always go to punk shows because I love the energy, and I love the ferocity of those shows. That doesn't mean I go home and listen to the records a whole bunch. I just bought a Bob Dylan record the other day, and I know every one of those songs by heart. That's what my mom brought me up on: stuff like Emmy Lou Harris, Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. My father brought me up on classical music, so I kind of got stuck in between the two. As I'm getting older, I'm 35 now, that's all I listen to. When I go to sleep at night, I listen to stuff like Brahms and Tchaikovsky. During the morning, I listen to Guy Clark and Steve Earle. I listen to endless folk music. I think it's all on the fact on how I was raised. My mom was sort of an earth mother. We lived in suburbia. Let me make that clear. I'm not claiming to be some country guy or some shit.

I found huge Johnny Cash influence on this record. Do you listen to any Johnny Cash at all?
No I don't and it's funny because I've read a lot of reviews where people reference Johnny Cash. I think it's because we both have directness in our music, and I really don't mind talking about violence that much. Don't forget, though, there are people like Merle Haggerd and Willy Nelson who've always been really rebellious country singers too. Maybe I'm not consciously trying to do that, but why not put some rebel into punk music. Music has been passive over the years including the 60s and 70s. Why don't we put a punk kick in it? How about we kick your fucking ass for never listening to us?

Did you require the help of any additional musicians on this record? I know you said you had your sister and your friend help you.
I wrote all the songs. When I recorded the record, though, I had a whole bunch of good friends come in and record with me. I intentionally hid the songs from them, so they never heard them because I wanted an improvised feel. When we went in and played, those guys were hearing the music for the first few times and writing their parts on the fly. I think that says a lot about the musicianship of the folks I play with



because let's face it, maybe I can write a half decent song, but I'm not a very talented musician or singer. These guys really stepped up and made it work. There's a song on the record called "Cardinal in Red Bed." This song is a just piano and vocals. The guy who came in named Daniel Clark heard me play the song one time and then recorded the piano track in one take. He jotted down the chord progressions. He heard me play the first chord and asked me what it was and I told him it was a G. I played the whole song and sang it to him, and then we went down and did it. This guy is pretty much a prodigy. He's one of the most beautiful piano players I've ever heard. In contrast to that, my sister Caitlin, who grew up playing classical music, just takes the songs to a different level. The last track on there, which is called "Wait at Milano", has all her violin parts improvised. It's just the same way with my brother too. My brother played piano too and Josh Small wailed his parts on steel guitar. It was great.

Who produced the record and how was the recording experience?
I guess I should give myself co-production credit for it, but the majority of the credit should go to Lance Koehler, who also plays drums on it. It was recorded at Minimum Wage Studio, which is literally two blocks from my house. He lives in a carriage house that was converted into a studio. It's got to be one of the simplest vibes that you go for with recording. I got to walk there every day. The house feels like home to me and to everybody else. It feels like you're in New Orleans and time stands still because it's so dark. It was just an easy experience. It was just intimate if that makes sense.

Do you think fans of Avail and fans of punk rock will enjoy this record? I've listened to it. I listen to punk rock and really enjoy the record.
I don't know. It's a good question. I know deep in my heart, that not every person is going to like everything that I do. No one plays music, does a magazine or writes books should expect everyone to enjoy what they do. I hope some people like it and that's it. Really that's what music is. Some people are uncomfortable with that. I'm always open to criticism. Someone who listens to Opeth or black metal bands in Sweden would probably hate the fucking record. Someone who likes Avail may or may not like the record. I'm always open to it though. It's just music in the end. It makes me terribly happy. It's like therapy for me. I'll always do it, and I'll always make it.

The record hasn't been out for very long, but what has the response been so far?
That's hard to say because they say it directly to me. I've been getting positive responses personally, but that doesn't mean that people don't like it. So far so good though. The reviews have been pretty good. I think it's more important is just the overall feeling of what we play live. It's like a real deep release, and the folks who come to the shows seem to have a great time. That's really what counts.

I know you're busy with Avail right now, but are you planning on touring on this record?
I finish up this Avail tour at the end of this month (January). I finish it in Arizona and one week later, I start a solo tour on the West Coast in Arizona. I basically fly home then fly back out to Arizona.

Who are you touring with?
On the West Coast, we'll be touring with Drag the River. They're also on Suburban Home. Playing with me will be my sister Caitlin and my buddy Josh Small. I usually switch up these lineups on tour. I sometimes play by myself or have Josh and Caitlin play along with me. Right when I come home, I'm going to help produce a Josh Small record for Suburban Home in the beginning of March. Then I leave at the end of March to tour with Smoke or Fire. I'll have a completely different lineup for that since that tour will be on the East Coast. I go to Europe and May and then come back and do the Midwest near the end of the summer. I'm going to tour all year on this record. I'm just going to keep making these records. In the meantime, I'm going to write my own songs and continue to write Avail songs.

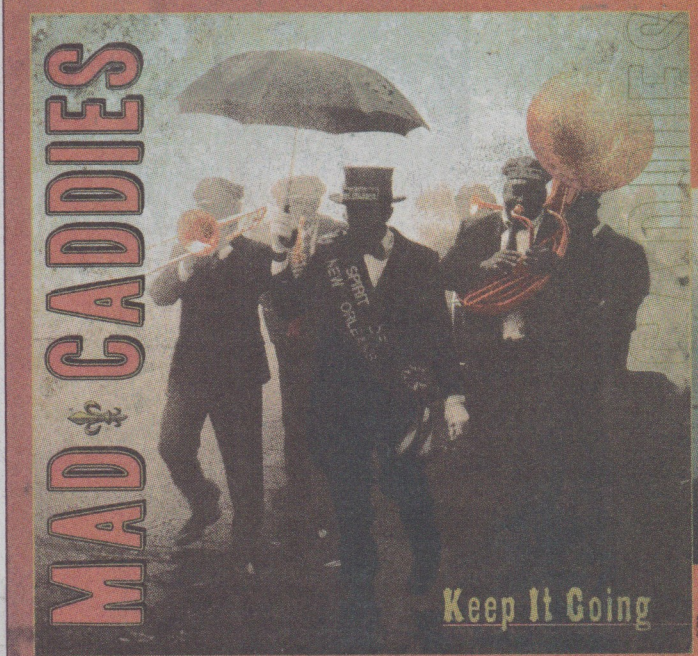
How are the Avail songs coming?
They're coming. We're not doing too much at all. I wish I could tell you we were doing more than we are. We have a handful of songs and they're coming together. This is probably our last tour until we really hammer out a bunch of songs or we just get tired of being home and go out and tour again.

Do you have anything else you'd like your fans to know about this record?
I appreciate people being interested in it and it means a lot to me.

I know you're really into history, politics and protests. How long have you been politically active?
I've been into politics since I've been a teenager. I grew up in northern Virginia which is now a cluster of suburban sprawl. For shows, growing up, we had to come down to Richmond or going up to DC to see bands like Dag Nasty. There were some great rock and punk bands from DC in the late 80s. What go hand in hand with those shows are protests in Richmond. I grew up with that. That had a tremendous impact on me and my outlook on life and the whole world. It's been inherent in me to be distrustful of the government and find active solutions to changing things. As I get older, I find myself becoming more and more comfortable with my own personal solutions like not spending money at places that don't deserve it.

Thomas Barnett, the singer of Strike Anywhere, is also from Richmond and also politically active. Do you cross paths a lot?
Thomas is a great friend of mine. We grew up doing the same thing in the late 80s in Richmond. It's not uncommon for me to be anywhere at a protest and not run into a handful of my punk rock peers or heroes from the past and that's really important to me to know that you don't just grow out of it and it's not just a phase. It's reality and how you need to live your life. Thomas is a total example of that.

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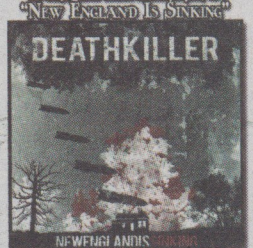


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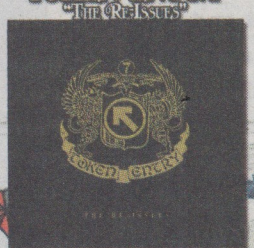
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DEATHKILLER
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TOKEN ENTRY
"The Re-Issues"



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BEOWULF
"Westminster & 5th"



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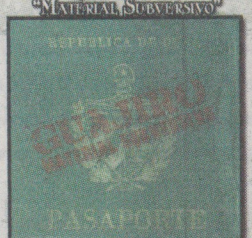


FABULOUS DISASTER
"Love At First Fight"



Brand new record since their two Fat Wreck releases 'Put Out Or Get Out' & 'Panty Raid'. "They're the best female punk band of all times" Fat Mike (NOFX)

GUAJIRO
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SAOSIN

By Michelle Kandalaft aka Mishfit
Photography By Josh Hofer-corruptedlens.net

One of a kind vocal styling, shredding guitar riffs, catchy harmonies and great live shows, I introduce to you Saosin. This five-piece rock outfit hailing from Southern California has graced us with their first full-length album. Now a part of the Capitol Records family these hometown heroes are causing quite a stir. With consistent touring along with joining big name festivals such as the Vans Warped tour and Bamboozle Saosin have proven themselves to be more then just another catchy media molded rock act. With the success of their EP "Translating the Name" as well as continued success with this new self titled full length it is safe to say Saosin is here to stay.

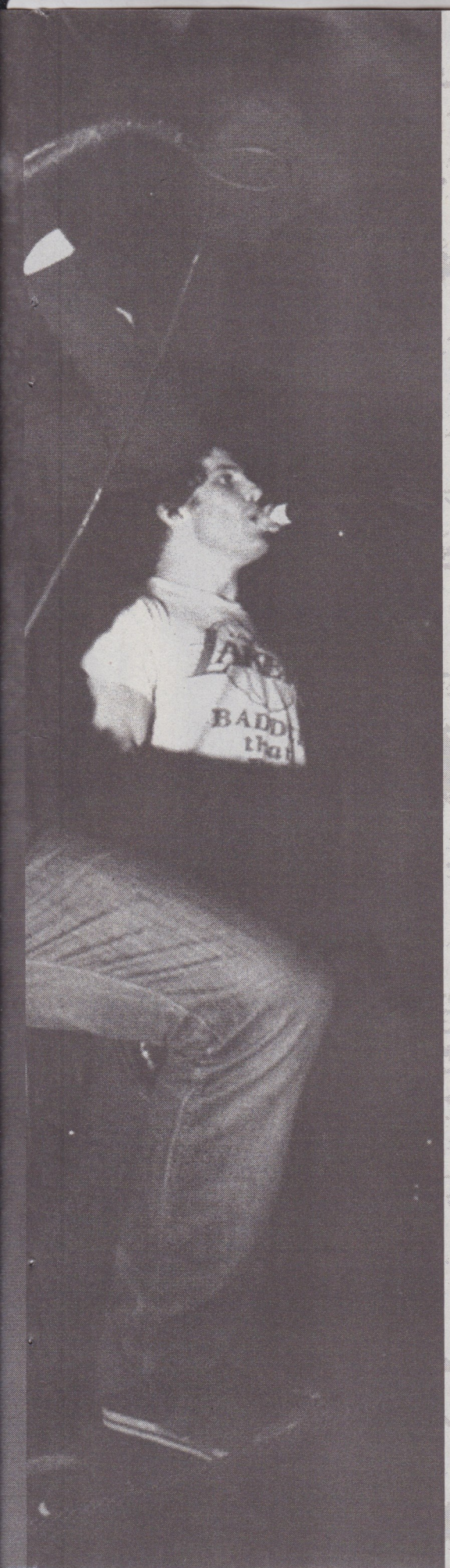


Bassist Chris Sorenson kindly took the time to answer a few questions to give us the inside scoops on what Saosin is all about.

Saosin has been around since 2003 and Cove joined in 2004. You are now signed to a major after only two EP's under your belt. Do you feel lucky or do you feel after 3 years it is time for Saosin to get huge coverage?
Well things just moved really quickly for us. Even though we signed to a major we did not start a record for almost a year. We signed to Capitol because we felt the people there got what we were about. Also we did not want to be in a position where we would want to "move up" to the next level and have to deal with switching over. We wanted to have as many resources at our feet as possible and really be somewhere we could be heard and respected.

After Anthony left the band you held auditions Cove was chosen for lead vocals how was the process?
We never had a nationwide audition or anything we only tried out a handful of dudes. We really thought we were done after Anthony left.

Well, I'm sure fans are very glad to hear you are far from finished. You are all friends with other bands in the same or similar genres, such as Take the Crown, Eighteen Visions and Every Time I Die. Do you feel this is a plus or do you sometimes feel like you are almost competing against your friends.
All the bands we are friends with we really respect. I do not think it is a real competition because in our spot and I am sure a lot of others, music is hard to treat as a business [Laughs]. It is





always fun to see what other bands are doing. I think we feed off each other more then compete. It seems in the past that when good music is being made its surrounded by other good music.

How did the last tours go? Warped Tour, Bamboozle and the AFI shows, any good memories to share?
Everyday good memories are made. We are all pumped to be doing what we are doing. It feeds our music and our live shows. Warped tour was super rough but made us a strong touring group, AFI made us realize what a real band was, and Bamboozle was wet. Stolen pizza truck is all I can say about that one.

Are you looking forward to your future tours or did those shows burn you out at all?
We only did Warped for two weeks and that was after seven months off. Basically after Warped we took three weeks off then at the beginning of August we have been on tour and are going until the end of May. Oh and Did I mention we get to travel around the globe two times, support our record, and cruise around in a bus with friends and just hannnggg?

Point taken and I would have to say I agree with that statement. Saosin had a few in stores for the new album. How do you like the idea of a ton of kids coming out to meet you? Are you ever taken back by your popularity or are you getting used to it?
We have never released a record before, so we were taken back. We sat and signed everything, every single one. A lot of the kids that came out had been there since day one too.

Getting back to the album how did the recording process go? Did it take longer then expected to





perfect?
Actually it did not take long enough. But for all I know the record would not have come out the way it did if we took longer. If we are in a good spot when it comes time to make a new record I would really like to not feel any time constraints.

Any guest vocals or appearances on this album?
We sang all our own backup vocals on the record. Me (Chris), Justin, Beau and Cove all sing on the record.

Playing shows and recording are two very different worlds. Which do you find more enjoyable?
I like recording a lot. Especially recording with other bands. Playing live can become routine sometimes, where recording is uncertain and more easily changed. Nothing is final until released.

How did you decide on the cover art what does the beetle signify?
Martin Kvamme submitted a few ideas for layouts and one of the first ones was just a picture of the beetle specimen. We kind of twisted it and made it ours by incorporating metaphoric symbols and let it tell a story. It basically tells the story of an idea that gets too big for its own shell. Letting your self go so the idea can become something else, something even bigger.

Is "bootyhole" the next Saosin single? [Laughs]
That is some of the stuff we did when we did not have a singer yet.

Here are some quick random questions for you. Who would win in a fight?
Probably Justin, he knows karate or some shit. He can break arms.

Share a "crazy" tour story.
Umm, [Laughing] we shot fireworks at





Story of the Year in Kansas and ended up lighting 40 acres on the side of the road on fire. Jail time ruled.

That is amazing [Laughs]. What is your favorite food stop on the road?
Either Sonic burger, Cracker Barrel, or Chipotle

What is your favorite venue or city to play?
I really enjoy Chain Reaction in Anaheim.

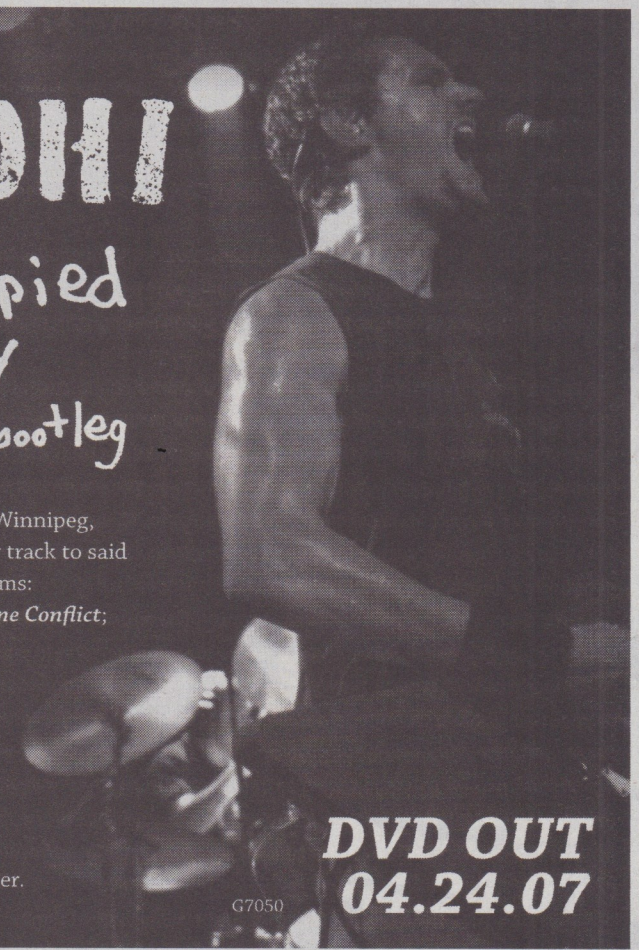
Any last words? This is open forum for you so anything you would like to tell fans or people in general.
Just the usual thanks and that we will keep shredding for as long as we can. Also, come meet us! We're normal people, basically.

For more information, tour dates and updates visit: www.saosin.com and for you professional lurkers out there: www.myspace.com/saosin.

PROPAGANDHI

LIVE - from occupied territory

an official bootleg



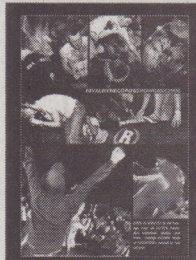
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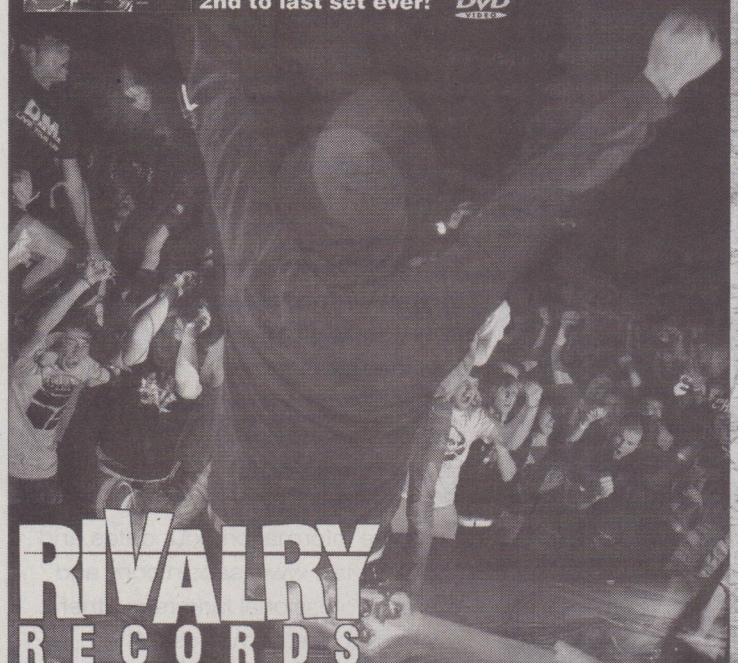
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OVERCOMING STRUGGLES AND MOVING ON

SMOKE OR FIRE

By Kiran Mehendale / Photography By Cassie Burke

Struggles are something every band has to deal with. The struggles can range from touring for the first time to trying to get signed by a record label. Smoke or Fire is a band that knows all about these struggles. They formed in Boston as Jericho but decided to move to Richmond for a change where they were forced to change their name not once, but two times. The band settled on Smoke or Fire and signed to Fat Wreck Chords where they are now ready to take on the world with the release of their second full length on Fat: *This Sinking Ship.* I had a chance to talk to Joe McMahon, singer/guitarist of the band, as they were preparing for the release of the new record.

For new fans of your band, could you briefly explain the history of your band?

We started as Jericho about 9 years ago. We moved down to Richmond, Virginia about 5 years ago and recorded *Above the City,* and that's when we got signed to Fat Records. Because of a lawsuit by another band named Jericho, we had to change the name of the band to Smoke or Fire. *Above the City* came out on Fat, and we spent the next couple of years touring on that record. Now we just finished our second record for Fat.

You guys have been compared to bands like Avail and Hot Water Music. Would you say that's an accurate comparison?

I'd say that's pretty accurate. I don't know if we completely sound like those bands. There's a ton of influences with those bands. Those were our favorite bands growing up, so people who like Avail and Hot Water Music should definitely check us out.

What other bands, both punk and non-punk, are you influenced by?



We're influenced by bands like the Replacements, Fugazi and Elliott Smith.

What was it like recording with Matt Allison? I know he recorded all the Lawrence Arms records and the first three records from Alkaline Trio.
Recording with Matt was amazing. The city of Chicago was an unbelievable city to record in. He's got a great studio. Matt is just the nicest guy in the world. He really knows what he's doing. He just knows his way around as far as producing and engineering goes. He also has such a respect for what the band wants to do. It was just an absolute privilege for us to work with Matt. He's an incredible guy.

Did Neil from the Lawrence Arms help with the recording? I read somewhere that he helped with the new record.
Neil came in, which was really cool because we toured with the Lawrence Arms. This was our first time meeting Matt. Matt came out to the Anti-Flag tour when we were in Chicago, and we met him there. Having Neil around the studio to help was really cool. He came in after they were done touring.

How long did you guys spend recording this record?
We spent 5 weeks in Chicago recording this record which is really crazy for us because we'd never been in a studio longer than 10 days. Two weeks was the max. It was strange, but it was also on a completely different time schedule. It wasn't like working morning 'til night because of time and money constraints. The way Matt works is amazing. He basically charges by the song. If you go in there and record x amount of songs, then it costs you for each song no matter how long it takes. Matt was just interested in having it sound as good as it could possibly sound, so that was kind of the coolest thing was that we had as much time as we did to make the songs sound good. I'm glad we did it that way.

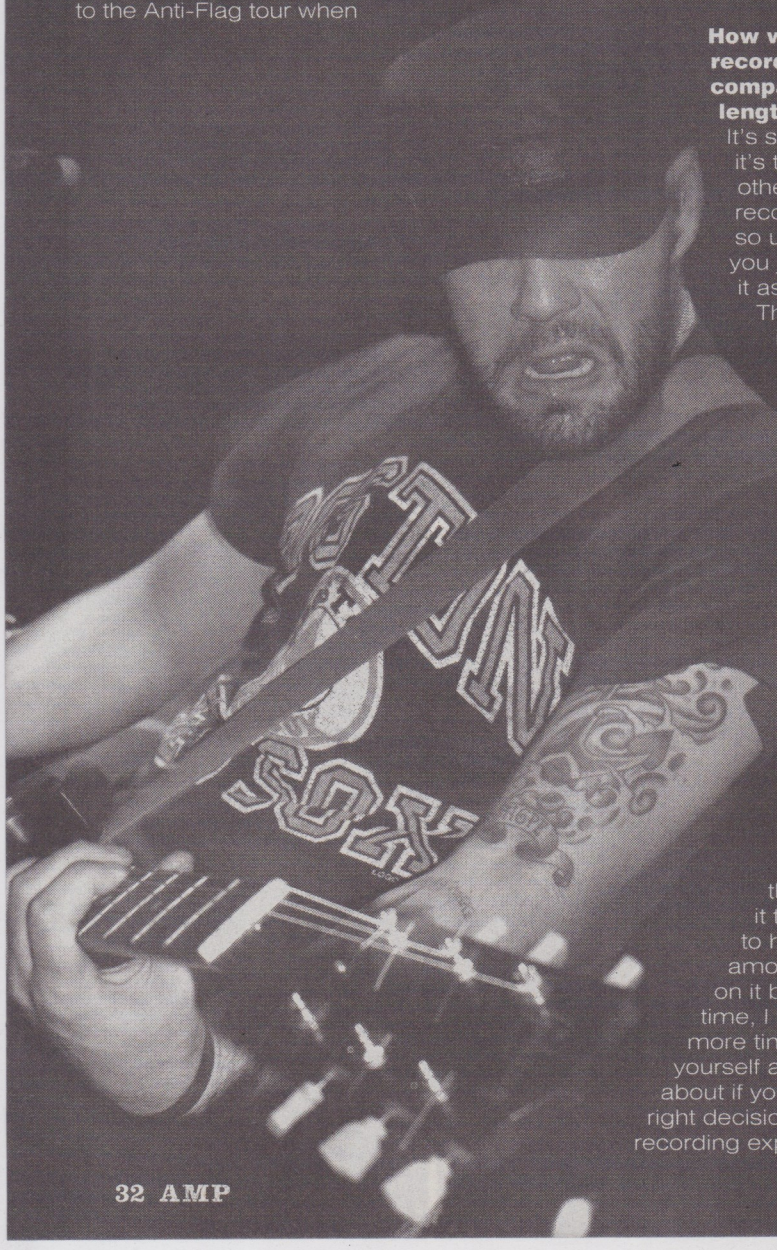
How would you rate this recording experience compared to other full lengths and EPs?
It's strange because it's tough to rate. The other times that we've recorded have been so under the gun that you just go in and do it as fast as you can. The first e.p. we did in an hour and a half because we had that much money to just record for two hours. The second EP we did in 3 days and *Above the City* we did in 12 days. This is the first time we actually just got to hang out in the studio, take our time and do it the way we wanted it to. It was amazing to have that much amount of time to work on it but at the same time, I found that there was more time to second guess yourself and think more about if you were making the right decision. It was the best recording experience we've ever had but on the other hand, I found myself kind of thinking that we should do more with the time we have.

Did you guys have a bigger budget with this new record?
This record ended up costing the same as *Above the City.* That was a 12-song record that studio cost $500 a day. This record is a 12-song record that cost $450 a song. It was cheaper for us to do this record than the last record.

After listening to the new record, I found a great progression from your last CD. The songs are longer and you use varying tempos. How did you approach the writing process this time?
We don't really approach it in a real serious way. We don't say: "This is what we need to do. This is what we don't need to do." We just kind of write and see what we like. Me and Jeremy both write the music and bring things in. It was kind of different this time because Jeremy on the west coast, and I was on the east coast. We were both sending stuff back and forth. That was the only real difference in the process. We don't really set out to make a certain record. We just kind of write and see where it goes, and this is where it went.

This is your first record with the new drummer. Did his background and his experience in From Ashes Rise contribute to your sound?
Absolutely, Dave is just an incredible drummer. We were 2 weeks away from going into the studio with this record when Nick had to leave the band because of family illness and whatnot. We tried to figure out what to do and decided to cancel our original date to record. The first name that came across and our number 1 choice was Dave. We had played some shows with From Ashes Rise and just loved Dave's style. We had met Dave before and hung out with. He was an amazing guy, and his drumming is incredible. Matt has recorded with so many people, and Matt said that Dave was one of the best drummer's he's ever worked with in his life. Dave brought a lot to the table.

What's the meaning of the title of the record: *This Sinking Ship?* I could be totally wrong here, but does it have anything to do with mainstream music and mainstream culture in general and how it's sinking.
Yeah, it's kind of everything in general. It just revolves around everything. It's weird because we're usually a pretty happy group of people when it comes to music. It's our outlet, and that's where we dump all of our shit. The state of people's families, politics and everything in this country in general seems like everything is falling apart.



You guys chose "Patty Hearst Syndrome" for the single of the record and also made a video for it. Why did you guys decided to choose that song for the single?
We just felt like that song was the strongest song off the record and the best song to make a video for. We hate making videos where it's just live performance. I know we did a video for "California's Burning" from *Above the City*. It was kind of a last minute thing and ended up being 100 % band performance which makes us super uncomfortable. We'd really like to have a video with a storyline and "Patty Hearst" seemed like a song you could put a storyline too because it's based on the abduction of Patty Hearst. We figured it's a good, solid song you can make a video for. We wanted more storyline than live performance because it bores us and makes us uncomfortable at the same time.

Lyrically, what was your inspiration for the record?
The biggest inspiration was all the touring we did for *Above the City*. We did the 50-state tour and went around the country a bunch of times. We got to go overseas for the first time in our lives and go to different countries. It was just more of what's really going on. Everyone is fighting in disagreement. It's so easy right now to write a political record that just bashes Bush and Republicans and all that stuff. There's a little bit of that, but there's more of how it's something that's been happening for so long and is going to happen for so long. All in all, we're not all that different. Going insane with people who have completely different thoughts and ideas than I do and thinking they're completely amazing people except they come from a different place and think differently. It doesn't mean I'm right and they're right. It's basically about what separates us all and what makes us more human and trying to explore those things more. It's just about taking a political stance on things.



What would advice would you give to new punk rock bands starting out in a scene where punk rock is not accepted like it was 10 years ago?
I would say tour. That's always my advice. People always ask us about being in a young band. I just say tour because it's a win-win situation. That's all we ever did for years was eat shit and tour. No matter what happens, just tour. That experience of touring will be good.

I know every band on Fat gets this, but what's it like being on such a highly regarded label in the punk scene?
I love being on Fat. They are just good friends. It's such an easy relationship to have. They're just very supportive and make it fun. They make it very easy to do what we do.

Are all of you guys living in Richmond right now?
No. we're all over the place. I actually moved to Boston this past summer. My wife got a job there. Part of our deal was I'm in the road 9 months out of the year, so if she gets a job she wants, I'll go where she wants, so I moved to Boston. Ken moved to Salem, Dave moved to Portland, Oregon and Jeremy moved to Oakland, California.

What's that like when you guys want to meet up for practice or you guys want to meet up before a tour?
It hasn't been a big issue so far. It was real tough going into this record because we were so close going into the studio. We lost our drummer, but we got Dave. Jeremy was in California and Ken was already moving. I was moving right through that process right before Dave joined, so basically we got a practice space in Boston and Dave and Jeremy came out and stayed with me. We practiced every day, went to Chicago and recorded the record. It will probably be like that for our next tour. Everyone will be responsible to practice on their own, and it takes a lot of communication. Touring will help a lot.

What's the music scene like in Richmond? Are there any bands worth checking out besides Avail and Strike Anywhere?
There's this band called Landmines who are really good. They're up and coming. Richmond has a really great scene. They're going through a tough transition as far as venues and things like that. A lot of clubs have closed down. I would tell people to keep a lookout for a band called Landmines.

What does touring look like?
We're going to try and do as much as possible. We're planning on spending the next year touring as much as we can just like when *Above the City* was released. We're going to do the states. We're working on doing a headlining tour in the states and Canada which would be our first headlining tour. We plan on doing Europe and hopefully Japan and Australia as well.

Anything else you'd like to say to your fans?
All the e-mails we got from touring in support of *Above the City* have been incredible. I think we're always kind of surprised because we spent so many years playing without anyone really caring. It's always kind of interesting for us to have people anticipating the new record. It's really neat for us. I hope people enjoy the record and come out and see us play.

BRIGHT EYES

By Alex Murphy

I am sitting on a very comfortable couch, looking out the window, stories from the ground in NYC, listening to a gypsy ramble about something I can not quite put together. The gypsy is not really here, but she is the intro on Bright Eye's newest album *Cassadaga*, one of many bizarre intros Conor Oberst (the mind behind Bright Eyes) has used to start off one of his six studio albums. "Cassadaga is a little town that has somewhere between a hundred and two hundred psychics that live there. It was a spiritualist camp that started in the late 1800s, and still exist today. You can go there and get a reading, get your future told to you." Oberst explains about the intro, as well as revealing the definition of the title.

A lot has happened to Oberst since he released two albums simultaneously two years ago, and you can hear it in the music as *Cassadaga* is a much more uplifting, happier sounding album compared to previous releases. Falling heavily on a country sound, with songs that resemble bluegrass and even slip into psychedelic. Oberst describing his song writing process as, "It is just what came out. I try not to think too much when I am writing songs, just let it happen, and leave the rest of to the listener."

However there are things that Oberst did strive to do, such as on "Classic Cars," a song that turns into a duet, "I like vocal harmonies a lot, and I have been getting more and more interested in them. For some of the songs on the new record even while I was writing them I heard female parts. On make a plan to love which is the fifth song on there [*Cassadaga*], it has a call and response between a girl

PHOTO: BUTCH HOGAN



choir. That was basically written with the song itself. There is so much that can be done with voices. It's sorta the most natural instrument of all."

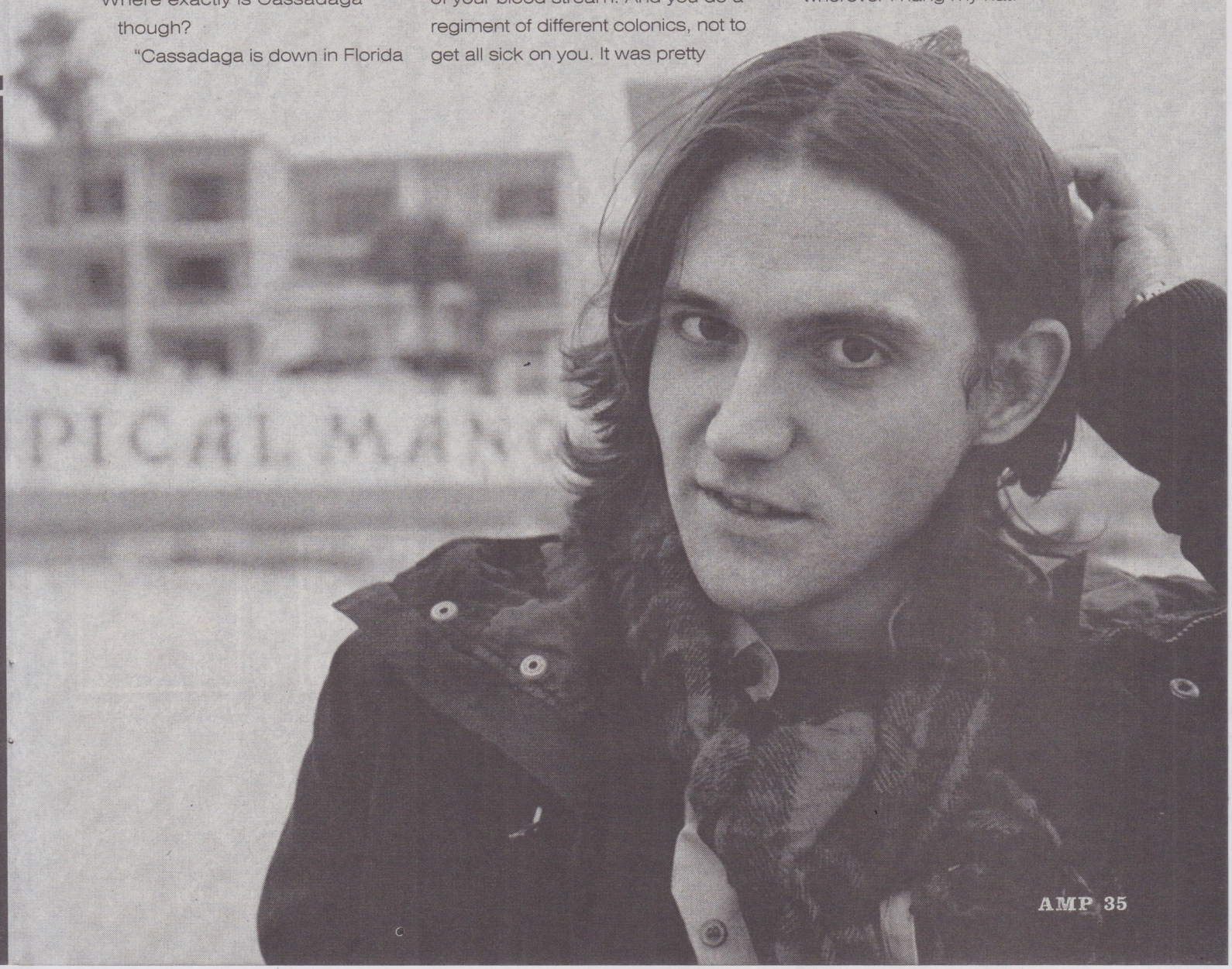
Although *Cassadaga* is not in truth a concept album, it those have a lot of reoccurring themes, a major one being travel, and trying to find a place to call your home. "I travel a lot and we incorporated a lot of different places for the record as well." Oberst gives a simple answer to why there is such a strong drifter feel in the album. There was more than just touring that involved Oberst moving across the country such as him having homes in New York, and still also living in his home town Omaha, Nebraska.

Where exactly is Cassadaga though?

"Cassadaga is down in Florida that I took a pilgrimage to...I went on a trip there about a year ago, a little over a year ago, I left with a little bit of a piece of mind, this feeling I took with me when I left. It kind of appeared in some of the songs, and seemed like a good of title as anything." This was not Oberst's only encounter with such feelings as he sings about a "detox walk" on "Cleanse Song," which turns out is about a trip he took to California. "I did a month long cleanse, cleanse and purify thyself, and it involves eating a very restricted diet of raw fruits and vegetables that decreases over time as you take these supplements and you drink this sort of hash like substance that kind of sucks the poisons out of your blood stream. And you do a regiment of different colonics, not to get all sick on you. It was pretty deep and intense experience...It is a good test of will power, too."

From here Oberst has put together his backing band to do just what the album states, and travel across the country in order to promote his new album, "We're just trying to get back into performing because we didn't play much last year. We're playing some smaller places, but then we are going to go on a more official tour in May once the record comes out."

As Oberst sings, "Everything must belong somewhere/I know that now/ That's why I'm staying here," on "I Must Belong Somewhere," I wonder where that home must be and Oberst simply replies with. "I guess it is just wherever I hang my hat."



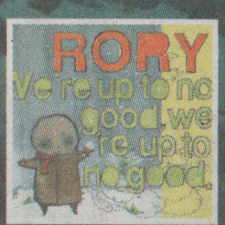
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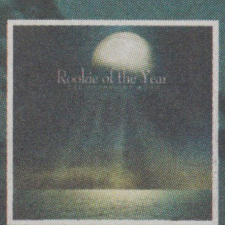
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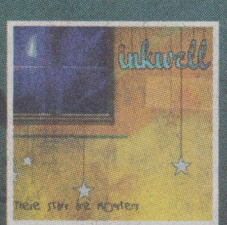
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KADDISFLY

"ARE YOU READY FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT?"

By Jen Conrad / Photography By Jason Rowley

When a band tells you that some people may not get them, you know that they are completely comfortable with their identity! Portland, Oregon's Kaddisfly is one of those bands. Kaddisfly members Chris Ruff (vocals/piano), Aaron Tollefson (guitar), Kile Brewer (bass), Beau Kuther (drums/percussion), Kelsey Kuther (drums/percussion) are distinctly sure of one thing...that they're in this game to make great music and for the love of the art. The eclectic sonic canvas that Kaddisfly creates is anything but ordinary. Nothing orthodox...nothing boring...nothing ho-hum!

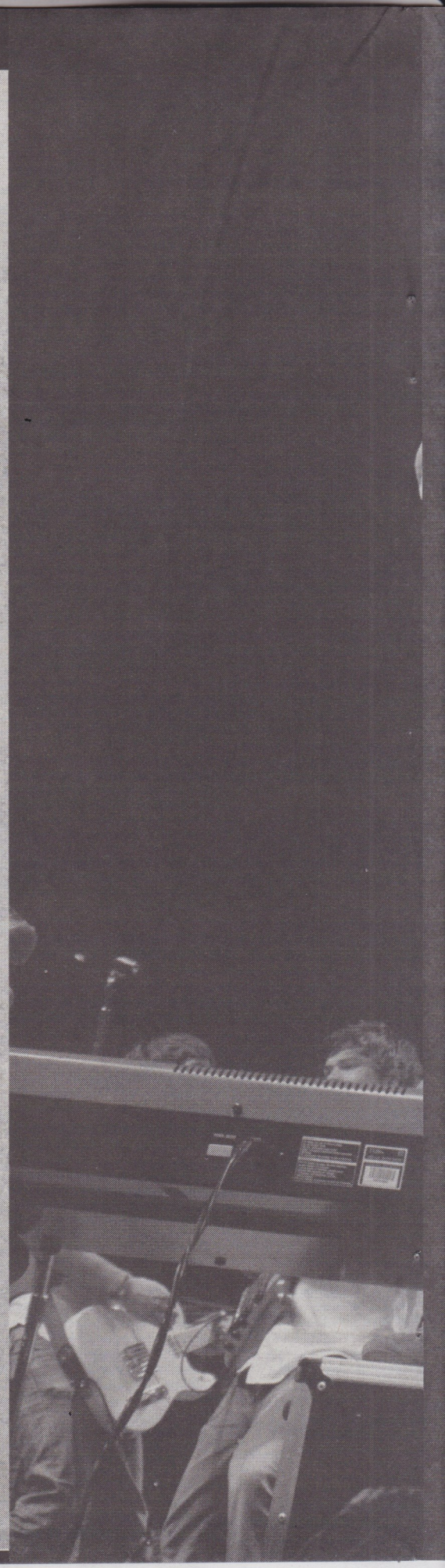
With the March release of their third full-length album, "Set Sail the Prairie," Kaddisfly begins their journey where their previous album left off. In fact, this album is the second in a trilogy that the band began with their former release, "Buy Our Intention; We'll Buy You a Unicorn." "Set Sail the Prairie" is an aural excursion through a calendar year in various parts of the world, fully complemented by native instrumentation and style. The album is a journey conceptually, lyrically and sonically. Kaddisfly has a unique depth that is so often lacking in today's music. But with this depth comes the possibility of nay-sayers and limited commercial opportunities in this fickle industry. Kaddisfly knows that, but is staying true to themselves by staying with their vision, and making their own kind of music! Yeah, they're a bit different...but different is fresh...different is stirring...and different may just give you something to be excited about! "Set Sail the Prairie" surely fascinated me and is nothing short of impressive! It's one of those albums that when you put on your headphones and close your eyes, you lose yourself and are completely at the mercy of the band. Fans of every genre from jazz to hip-hop will find something to dig! Kaddisfly invites you to come along on their journey! Sit back allow them to be your guide! Before you leave though, take a couple of minutes to get to know Kaddisfly's front man, Chris Ruff!

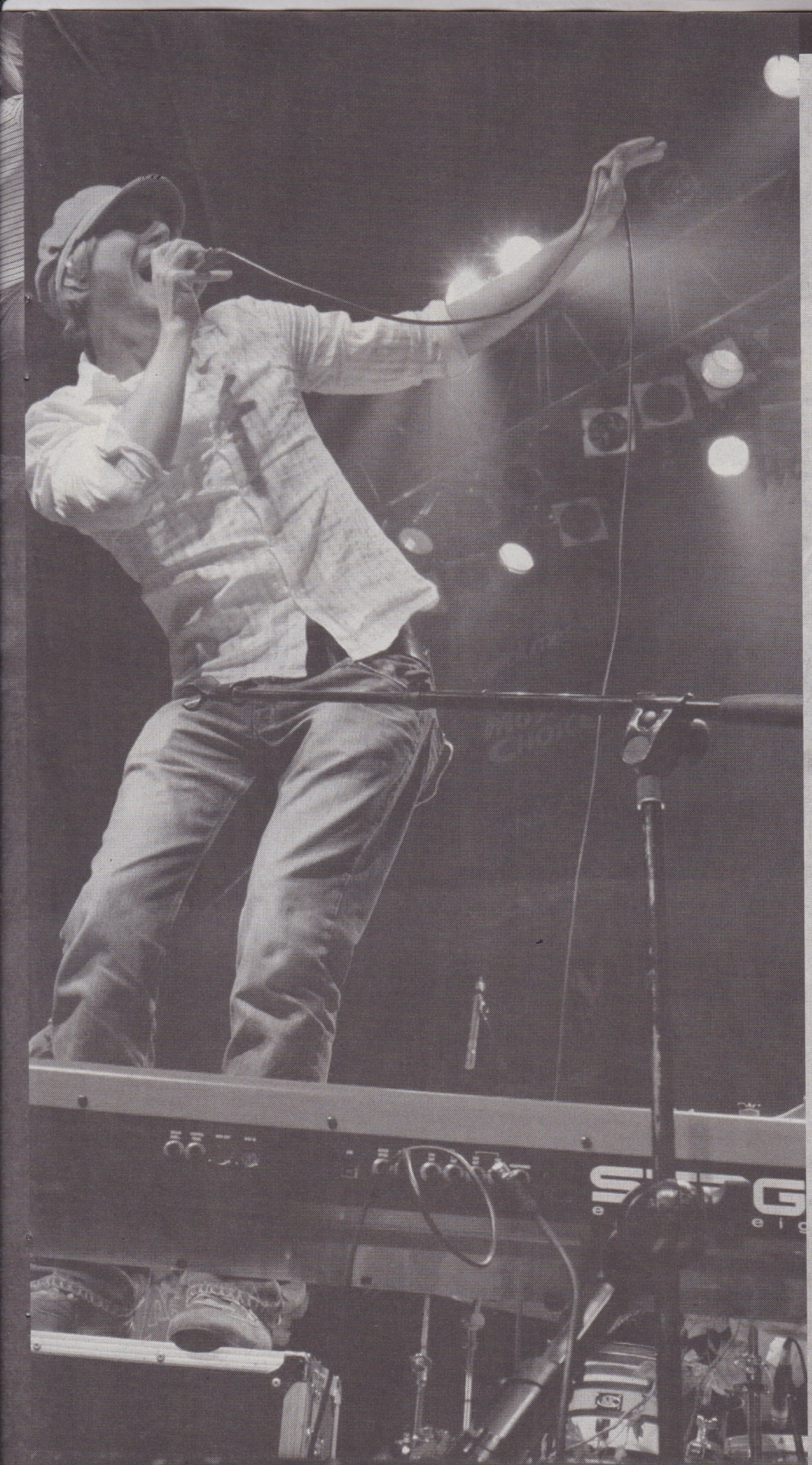
Hi Chris! Are you ready to go?
Hi, Jen! Sure, yeah! I'm always ready... I'm already going! (laughs)

Cool! Could you give us a brief history of your band?
One of our guitarists and I have been playing together for I guess like 10 years now...since high school. We were in a band back then just jamming. We graduated and went on to college and the band kind of went through several metamorphoses. Eventually the lineup became what it was, and that's pretty much when Kaddisfly was born. That was about 6 years ago.

Where did the name Kaddisfly come from? It's very unusual...
It doesn't really have a deep meaning behind it, but a caddisfly, spelled differently is actually an insect native to the Northwest. It's one of those little bugs that can walk on water and are used in fly fishing and stuff...

Ahh! So, "Set Sail the Prairie" is your second full-length album on Hopeless Records. It is scheduled to be out in March and is the second album in a trilogy. Tell us about the album...
It's called "Set Sail the Prairie"...to preface here, our goal is to write good music and solid songs...that's kind of our main goal. And then for music geeks and nerds like we are, we try some other stuff. So as a band, we're kind of multi-layered. You can either take it at face value or dig a little deeper. For the people that want to get into it more, there is somewhat of a concept there. It's about being on a one-year long journey throughout the physical world as we know it. Each song correlates to a different month of the year. We vibed the record out seasonally...Aaron





actually sees music in colors and depending on how it vibed to us and what he saw in it...that's kind of how we decided where to put the song on the record...sort of just our mood. It's something you really have to close your eyes and just get into to realize. But as it flows along, each song also correlates to a different country or region outside the United States. Some of the songs were actually vibed out with some native instrumentation or some musical vibe of that region. Some of those little nuances are littered throughout the album, as well. So for those that want to really get into it, there is some other stuff there. But, overall, we just wanted to do a good album and we're happy with the product we came up with!

I've listened to it a couple of times, and I'll be honest with you, I have never heard your music until this one. It was like you said a flow...and you just have to take it all in...it's like a journey...

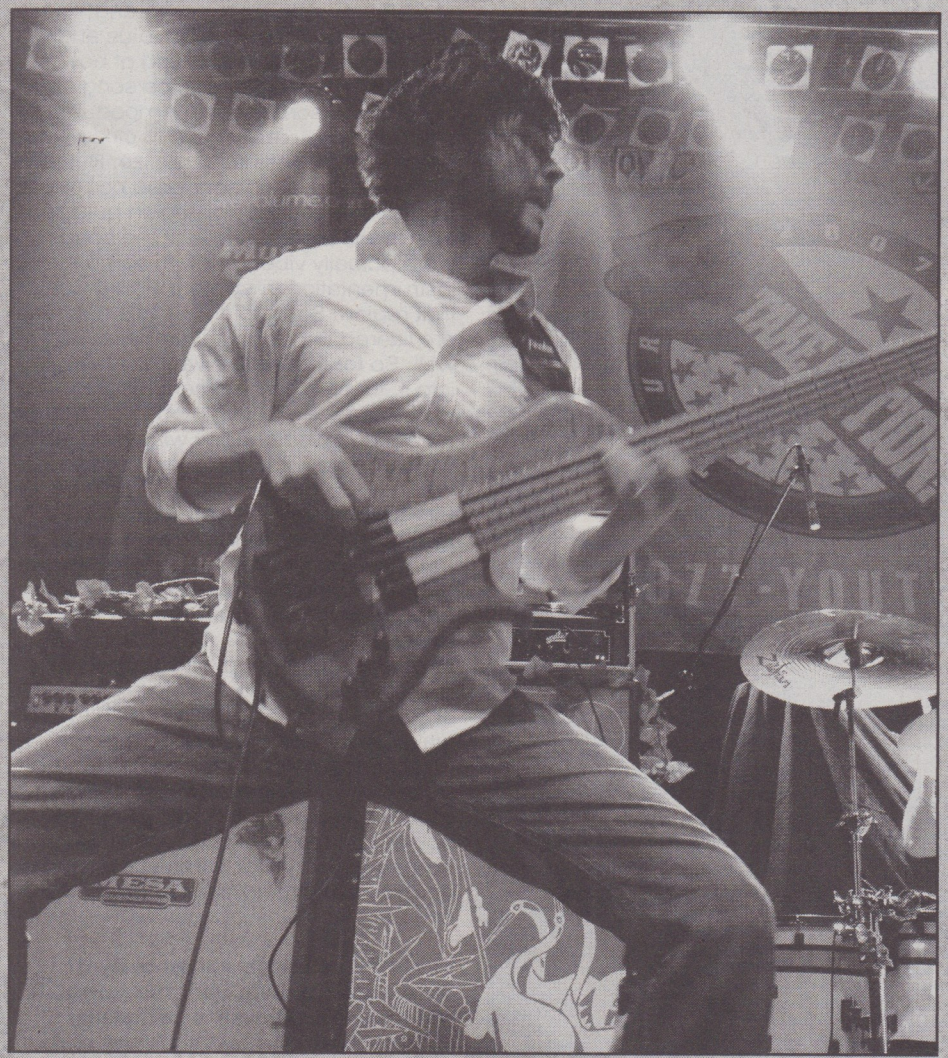
I think for some people it's probably too much and they're like, 'This is a bunch of B.S.! What the heck?' But with the way we write, we have such a range of influence, that I think any true fan of ours is open minded. On one level, it's probably easy to disregard what we're doing, but that's only if you're stubborn and a somewhat ignorant type of person and you don't really want to give it the chance that I think it deserves.

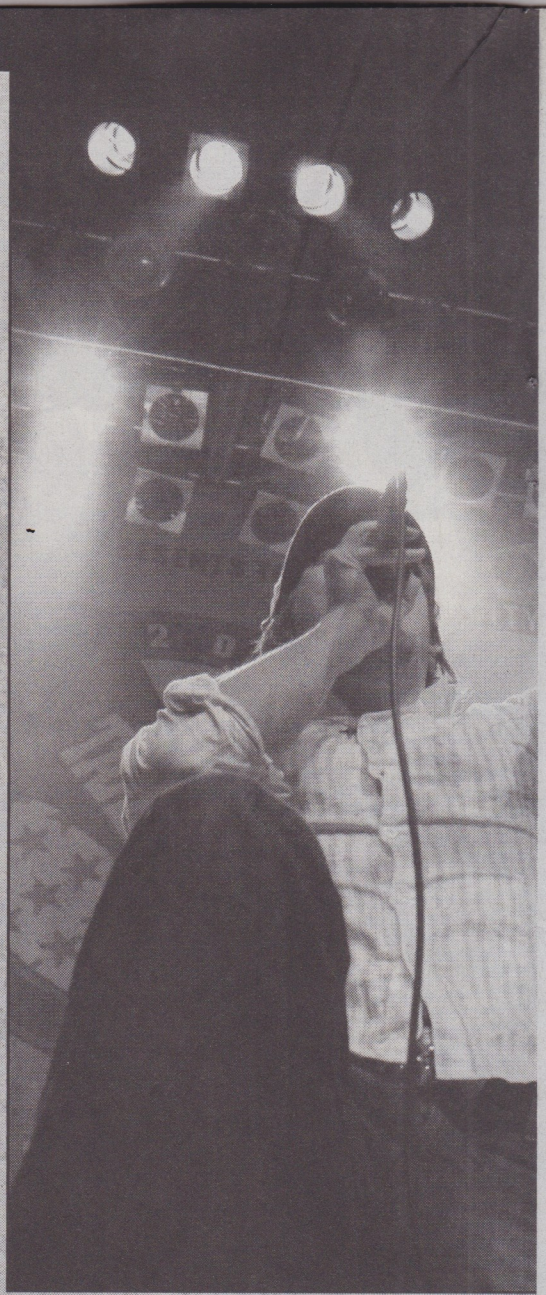
Yeah! I was totally taken in by it! Your musical style isn't the norm...it's not cookie-cutter...it's not totally commercial...it's fresh...to me it was a bit jazzy...

Yeah, definitely there's a strong jazz influence in it!

I can't wait to see your show because I want to see how this comes across live. I'm a big live music fan, so...I'm looking forward to it! What is the idea, then, behind the trilogy? Did the concept of the trilogy come to mind before the first album in the trilogy?

Really during the making of the first one. As we developed the first one, we knew that there was something more there... there was a real story we can tell here. It can transcend just one record alone and we thought it would be a cool thing to kind of define the beginning of our start with the label. So we decided to extend it out over a three record period...like all great sequences typically come in trilogy form. So we kind of followed that pattern. It started out with our last record, "Buy Our Intention; We'll Buy You a Unicorn." The first song on that record is called "La Primera Natural Disaster" which stands for "The Beginning" then you go to track 13, "Buy Our Intention; We'll Buy You a Unicorn" which marked the present. It was somewhat of a historical





timeline of kind of the stream of human consciousness or human thought... there's more of a lyrical flow and theme to it, and then you kind of geek out and get into it. Once you're in the present, "Buy An Intention..." then you go to the future, which is "Set Sail the Prairie", the record that's coming out now...and then the end which is "Galloping on Sailboats" which will be our next release. So, our last album was kind of an overall timeline development and these last two records are more in depth versions of the snapshot that we gave on the last album.

That's very cool! You don't find too many concept albums, and you definitely don't find many in trilogy form!
I'm sure there are some folks out there that take everything very, very literally. But it takes an open-minded and intelligent person to really get the feel...it's kind of a fourth dimensional thing.

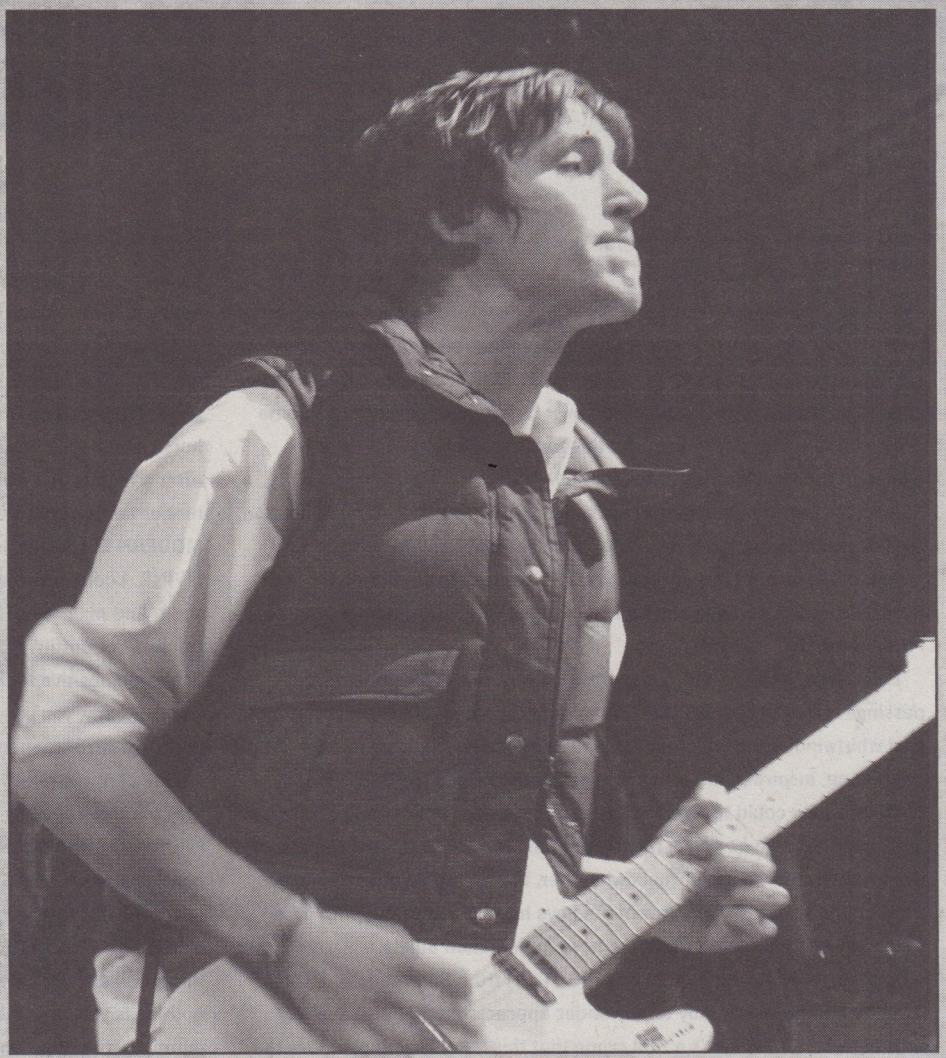
Since the concept came up in the first album, and you're going through the second album now, has your writing process had to change...are you more forward-looking now as you wrote "Set Sail..."?
I think our writing process has just evolved. Things develop slowly and naturally and nothing is forced. We just tried to be more mindful of what we're doing. I think the main thing we've continued to learn is just the space that's needed. You give each other space and room and know when each instrument in important because we're creating something relevant and important to the album and to the song.

I have to tell you too, that I think your voice is an awesome instrument in itself. I see the vocals as being an integral part of what's going on with the band...and I was taken by your voice off the bat!
It means a lot...it's a work in progress...I appreciate that!

You guys will also be donating a portion of this album's sales to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. Tell us about that cause...
We wanted to release this album on Sub-City for that reason. We actually wanted to do that on the first one, but we were new to the label and wanted to feel things out first. Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation basically just provides underprivileged schools with musical instruments and funding for music programs. We targeted our donations to the Oregon schools who are most in need since that's our home state. Get some kids playing some tunes! We feel that music is just as important as math and English in school! Music is a good medium for teaching both of those subjects, whether it be lyrics or musical form and all that stuff...

It's a great outlet for kids to focus on! You're also on the Take Action! tour right now. How did you become involved with that tour?
The Take Action! tour has been around for quite a few years now. We've gone to the shows in the past, and they're usually pretty killer bills! We find a lot of kids go out and it's a great common





meeting ground to really spread the message. The Take Action! tour's message is promoting awareness for suicide...especially among the young community in the United States. This year, we became a part of it pretty much through Sub-City. We thought it was a good time and they wanted us on based on where we were at as a band. Of course, we wanted to do it...it's a great opportunity to go out and play music for a bunch of people and support a good cause! Hopefully we can make an impact on some kids' lives out there...

What a great cause! I just got the compilation and it's awesome! The whole idea of this tour is great...Sub City and Hopeless do a great job! Your band is a relentless touring band...you guys were basically on tour for 2 years...

...actually like the last 3 years...we haven't really lived anywhere for that long... (laughs)

So you're from nowhere right now, huh? (laughs) What do you think the importance of touring is for a band?

No idea! (laughs) I often lose that...it's so day to day and sometimes you wonder what the heck you're doing...others it's the greatest thing on Earth! When you're an up and coming band, you think about effective touring and what's the point? What's the point of playing this room for 5 people versus playing in a room for 500 people. What's going on? How can it go night to night like that? But the thing is the impact you're making on the kids out there. If there are 5 people in the room and you end up playing the show and you make an impact on them ...I think you just have to have faith in what you're doing in the world. I know that one day when we have reached a slightly higher level of notoriety, those kids will have that memory to look back on and see what we had. We've really grown. Everything we've done as a band has been super grass roots from the ground up, so we haven't taken any huge leaps yet. And because of what we're doing, I don't see it ever happening like that...but it's just slowly and steadily going up. I think we'll just continue to climb like that! Every time we go through a city, there are a few more kids in the crowd, and it's starting to get really cool! Especially on this tour...even though we're by no means a main draw and we are the first band that plays on all the dates on the tour, we're still seeing great response! A lot of fans come out...people that we recognize and new people who are there for the show!

Finally what would you like to say to your fans?

Just thank you for your ears...thank you for the support! Hopefully we can make 15 more records and keep on going! Thank you for coming out to the shows and hanging around when there are only 5 people there and thank you for coming to this tour when there are 1,500!

Be sure to check out Kaddisfly on this year's Take Action! tour, winding through the country now! "Set Sail the Prairie" is available in March, so grab and copy and check out what a difference something different can make!

SAMMY WINSTON

Norcal, checking in with the world. I know scene reports are a bit ridiculous, especially in this age of instant online information trading, but I was just watching that American Hardcore documentary and feelings all sentimental over my dear old scene, so fuck off and enjoy. Besides, it's a great time here in Norcal. More happening now than ever before and it's glorious. Some promising saplings are rising from this fertile while some old favorites wither on the vine. Exciting days, indeed.

Also, it's only fair, perhaps in the spirit of archaic scene communication, I'm banging this ragged trash out at midnight and I am in no mood for purple prose or even proofreading, so I apologize ahead of time for both it's crude nature and any and all errors of spelling, grammar, or judgment I may commit.

Let's begin with the dearly departed. Surely, one of the most tragic passings is that of LIGHTS OUT. What had originated as a bit of a youthful posi whirlwind of Bostonian-influenced anthems had evolved into an interesting, inspiring unit that could pay equal tribute to YOUTH OF TODAY as they could to KYUSS. The members were influential not only as musicians but also as active members of the Norcal scene and the end of this great group is a major mellowharsher. Mourn but do not lose hope, word on the street is that a few of the boys have joined forces with other seasoned vets to create something new. Anticipation builds.

Another band to call it quits was RIGHT ON from San Francisco, who, truth be told, were not only totally under appreciated, but also cursed with the worst of luck. It's a real crime that this band crumbled under the weight of the world, because they really were an exciting band. Check out their seven inch on Malfunction.

And after a valiant effort to keep DOOMSDAY DEVICE going with Cris from POWERHOUSE on vocals after the tragic passing of the scene's godfather, Ernie Cortez, the end has come for this amazing project. No word yet on what will become of the album Ernie recorded before his passing, but hopefully someday it will see the light of day. I've heard and it is awesome. Also, there has been some talk of a tribute seven inch in Ernie's honor being put together. Not too much information on that yet, but it sure sounds promising.

In the interest of shameless self-promotion, I'll mention my own band. The brand new RAMPARTS feature members of ALL BETS OFF (Rockingham and myself), CEREMONY (the insanely talented axeman Anthony Avacado), and SABERTOOTH ZOMBIE (Cody, who I personally believe has the best voice in Norcal right now, although he is on bass in this band, as he is in Lifelong Tragedy). More self-promotion, you demand? Very well. My label SPIDERGHOST PRESSGANG has been terribly busy in the past year. We've released split seven inches featuring NEVER HEALED, SABERTOOTH ZOMBIE, LIFELONG TRAGEDY, STEEL TRAP, TRASH TALK, VIOLENT MINDS, DUCKHUNT, and HAMMERTIME, with plenty more on the horizon. I'm quite proud of these releases. This isn't a real label. This is a vanity press. I want to make cool little records, not take over the industry. Fortunately, the bands seem to share this sentiment. These songs are exclusive to these releases and thanks to Alex C's contribution, the layout are fantastic and the vinyl is as vivid and colorful as a respectable acid trip. OK, enough of this masturbatory bullshit.

Speaking of Alex C, big news regarding both of his bands, THESE DAYS and THE MOURNING DAWN. Sadly, the latter may be packing it in for good. Tragic, as their recently released demo is fantastic. THESE DAYS, a hurricane of INTEGRITY metal and HATEBREED brawn, have come back after a hiccup of a break-up and have thrown themselves into forward motion, with a split on Twelve Gauge Records with fellow Norcalians, MODERN EYES, another new band featuring members of TIME FOR LIVING. Look for the aforementioned split and a tour with GUNSMOKE soon. And may I say, it's also nice to see such an engaging frontman as Donny Shot puttin' it down for the Native Americans, a group that could use some positive representation in this scene as much as in society as a whole. Really, you've got to appreciate a hardcore kid named Donny Shot With Two Arrows when it's his real name, not some clever punk moniker.

One of my absolute favorite Norcal bands right now is NEVER HEALED. This band is a fucking monster. Featuring members of LOOK BACK AND LAUGH, LIGHTS OUT, YAPHET KOTTO, and the mid-90's straight edge phenomenon STRENGTH BY STRENGTH. They've released a 12" this year on Parts Unknown and the aforementioned 7" for Spiderghost (it's a split with VIOLENT MINDS). There is also another seven planned for this summer on HIT THE DECK. Tour plans are being bandied about, but nothing is yet set in stone. Also, members of NEVER HEALED have been jamming with Mike Cheese of the infamous GEHENNA. The world ain't ready for that, pal. The future looks good.

The crown jewel of our little scene, CEREMONY, has been writing a new seven inch, which will be out in June, and finalizing plans for a spring break tour of Alaska. Being the little festival darlings that they are, they will be playing both Sound&Fury Fest in Socal and This Is Hardcore Fest in Philly. Ryan Madtoast has hitched his life to Rivalry Records and is running their merchandise wing, which means in addition to printing shirts for VERSE, ALLEGIANCE, and the rest of the Rivalry gang, he spends his days creating an ungodly amount of new CEREMONY designs. Seriously, if you are a CEREMONY fan, you have a fucking ocean of choice when it comes to your back-to-school shopping this year.

Sacramento's HOODS, who, incidentally, are the only band still active from Norcal hardcore's rebirth in the nineties, have a new album coming out in April. They are also recently a DVD of a recent, sold-out hometown show. Let me say something about Mike Hood, because everyone has heard the horror stories. Hardcore kids always talk about staying true and being down and all that shit, but I've watched this scrappy little guitarist form one of the Bay's greatest hardcore bands, discover a ton of new bands, run a label, run a hardcore club, and basically use his experience and reputation to turn a whole generation of wayward Norcalian youngsters into proper hardcore kids. The guy deserves a lot of credit and his band deserves a lot of attention.

STEEL TRAP, those fucking delinquents from the North Bay, somehow

SAMMY WINSTON

convinced their various probation officers to allow them to leave the state and actually toured. Reports from the field gave the impression of highway bedlam, but they all returned home alive and ready to take the band more serious than ever. And that's good to hear, because despite the chaos and crime, these hooligans come together to great some awesome, bare-knuckle, piss and vinegar hardcore. Speaking of the TRAP and touring, their boys in TRASH TALK have also been burning the odometer of their rust bucket van, touring every which direction possible, spreading their trashy, thrashy, DC-esque gospel. They've also recently signed to Malfunction and released a fantastic full length. Andy from SINKING SHIPS is handling drum duties these days. Tragically, it appears that they have fled Norcal and made a new home in Seattle. Dummies.

Here's some exciting news: the Bay Area's straight edge powerhouse ALLEGIANCE will be touring this summer with their Rivalry labelmates VERSE and DOWN TO NOTHING. That's a hell of a bill, folks, and you'd be foolish to miss it. In other ALLEGIANCE news, the new full length is being mixed right now and should be out in July, just in time for tour season. And when that tour with VERSE and DOWN TO NOTHING winds down, the boys in ALLEGIANCE will be hopping the pond to tear up the U.K. Furthermore, they are eyeing the land of the rising sun for a few shows. England and Japan. How very World War II of them.

Frisco's ALCATRAZ are writing and recording new material for upcoming splits and an eventual full length, but things are complicated. Manuel is off in Europe WITH FIRST BLOOD, Kellen got nailed for being AWOL from the Army and is now stuck in some barracks until the matter is cleared up, and Justin is trying to be all adult and whatnot by purchasing a local business in the tourist section of town. Nonetheless, this band rules and it'll be great to see them back on track soon enough.

North Bay elder statesmen and dungeon lurkers in LIFELONG TRAGEDY have been awfully busy. They followed up their split on Deathwish with Socal's FINAL FIGHT with the split on Spiderghost with fellow Rohernt Parkers, SABEROOTH ZOMBIE. And speaking of Deathwish, they will be releasing a full length from LIFELONG TRAGEDY in the late summer or early fall. Eager anticipation.

SABERTOOTH ZOMBIE just had their debut album, "Midnight Venom" put out by San Jose's Twelve Gauge Records and I must insist that it is one of the absolute highlights of the year. Their live shows live up to the intensity of the album. Brilliant lyrics, brilliant riffs, the whole package. I implore you to pick up a copy.

Things are developing with GUNSMOKE, a great band whom many feared would remain a "little bedroom project". Featuring Andrew Dimaggio, vocalist for the late great FOR THE CROWN and Blaine of the late not-so-great TIGER UPPERCUT. They're recording a slew on new tracks and after a little line-up maintenance, will start playing shows.

DISPUTE just returned from a tour of Europe with AFI. Reports from the field deemed it a success. They've spent the time writing for their sophomore album, which looks like it's going to be an E.P. Unfortunately, their perfectionism is becoming a hindrance and the process is slow going. No doubt that whenever they release whatever they release, it's going to be good. These boys have been reaching further into a rockier sound and what I've heard thus far is promising. And if you missed their set of all 90's rock covers at the recent Nick Traina Foundation benefit show, you missed quite a spectacle. The same show featured CEREMONY doing a bushel of BLACK FLAG covers. Good times.

I recently caught a free show in Frisco's Needle Park by the hardcore scene's beloved metal band, ANIMOSITY, and was absolutely taken by how far they've come in the few years they've been together. Touring all year as they do certainly has paid off. They will be inflicting their new full length "Animal" on the world later this year. Then it is off to the east coast to record with Kurt Ballou before they take on their first headlining tour, The Brutalitour, which will be followed by a trip to Europe with metalcore giants, CONVERGE.

And Norcal hardcore's other metallic juggernaut, EMBRACE THE END, have spent the year writing a new record and breaking in two new members. Their last album was masterful, so expect good things from these Sacto boys. And if you are vinyl nerd, Man Alive Records has released the debut album in a variety of retarded color schemes.

CALIFORNIA LOVE has just returned from a jaunt across the Atlantic, where they showed Europe how stoned grind is done in Oakland. Seriously, these boys bring the glory of the late '90s powerviolence back to the Bay and we are all pretty much better off for it. They've already got two sick albums to their credit and another on the way, I'm sure. Fantastic fucking band.

The edgemen of Redding's SET IT STRAIGHT just had their full length "Live Your Heart And Never Follow" released and are writing an E.P. to follow it up. Although, the word on the street is that one of the boys indulged in an O'Douls and the debates are raging as to whether it constitutes an edge break. Oh, scandal!

Members of POWERHOUSE, U.S. ROUGHNECKS, LOWLIFE, and RESIST CONTROL have formed as MASSACRE TIME and played their first show recently with San Jose homies TRIED AND TRUE. MT have a great old school NYHC vibe with some street rock tendencies. And speaking of the almighty POWERHOUSE, frontman Cris has been quietly putting together a brand new band. Truth be told, the guy is one of the best frontmen this scene has produced and it's a relief that he hasn't given up just yet. Keep your ears open for this one.

REDHANDED is the newest addition to the Rivalry roster. A bit punkier than the label's usual fare, but still damn good. CEREMONY and SABERTOOTH ZOMBIE will be taking the young bucks to L.A. with them this summer. Sounds like a solid tour.

I guess that's about it for now. That's all you're getting. I'm tired and I don't really like hardcore all that much anyhow. There are a slew of bands I am neglecting to mention, like the always impressive LOOK BACK AND LAUGH and MURDER PRACTICE, but, again, I am tired and I am done with this jibba-jabba for the day. Oh, but RANCID will have a new album out soon. Get stoked. Best band to ever come out of the Bay Area, barring CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL, of course.

UNEARTH

AN INTERVIEW WITH TREVOR PHIPPS

By Jen Cray / www.jencray.com

I'm having a beer with Trevor Phipps in the back of Unearth's tour bus- listening to his stories about getting wasted with Dimebag, and sharing a blunt with Slayer front man Tom Araya. If there's a better way to warm up for a metal show, I don't know what it is.

You guys have been on tour without break for well over a year now.
We had a short break over Christmas. That was our first break in a long time. We wrote and we recorded the record- we hit the studio in March- and then we went right on tour and we didn't go home until Christmas. So we had about 5 weeks off and now we're back on the road and we're not gonna go home till July. It's fun though.

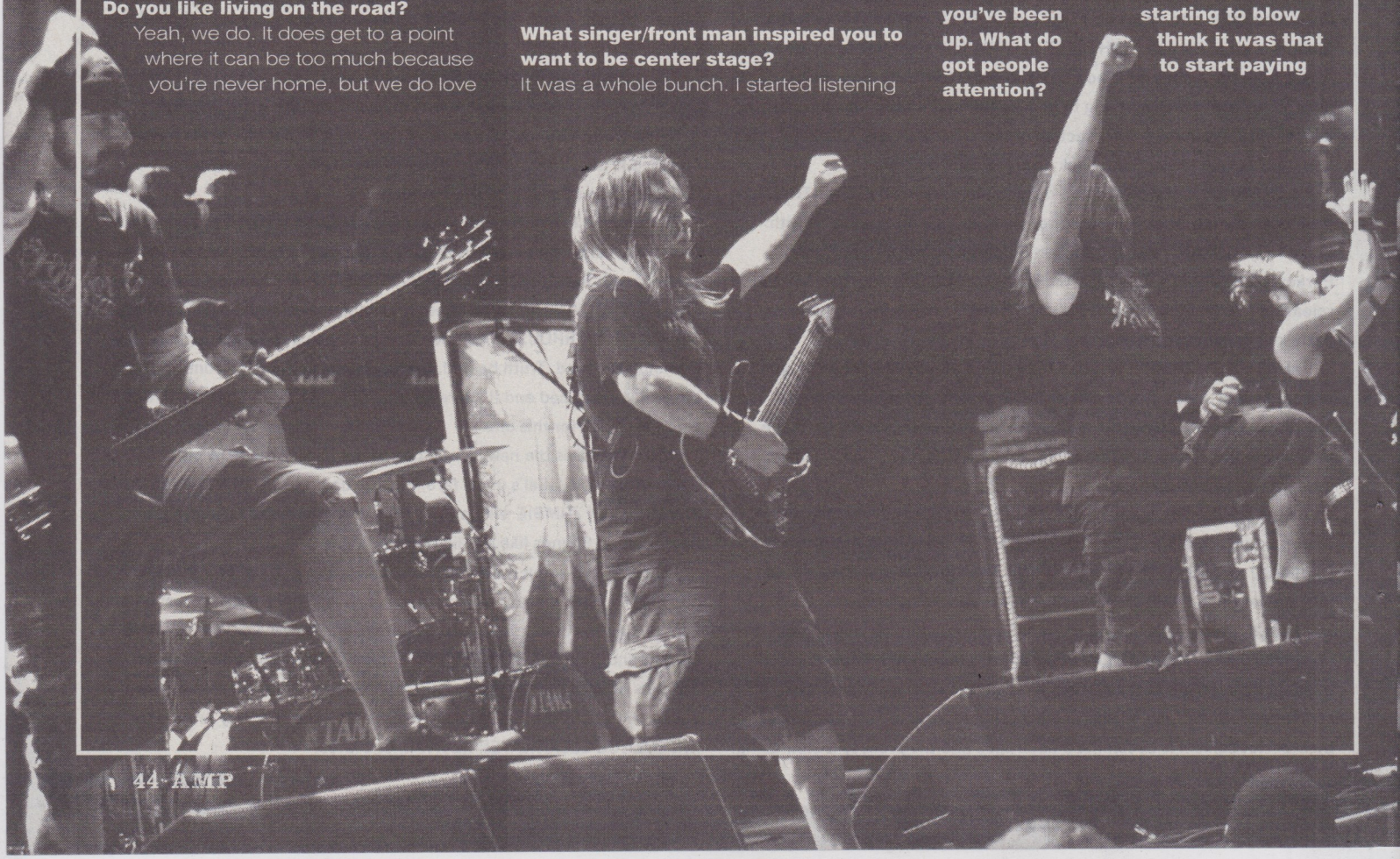
Do you like living on the road?
Yeah, we do. It does get to a point where it can be too much because you're never home, but we do love this as a career, so it's the best, but at the same time sometimes you're just like- Uh, I just want to be home for a day. This is kind of our home at this point.

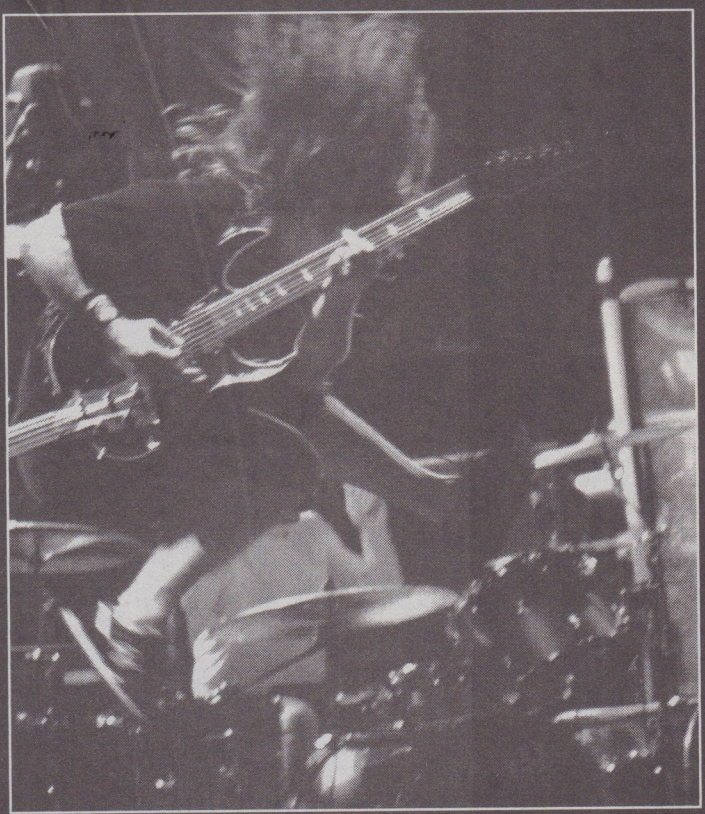
Is being in a touring band everything you dreamed it would be as a kid?
It's more! It's amazing. We can't complain, to us it's the greatest job- we get to travel the world and play music to people who enjoy it which, to us, is rad as hell. I just love it.

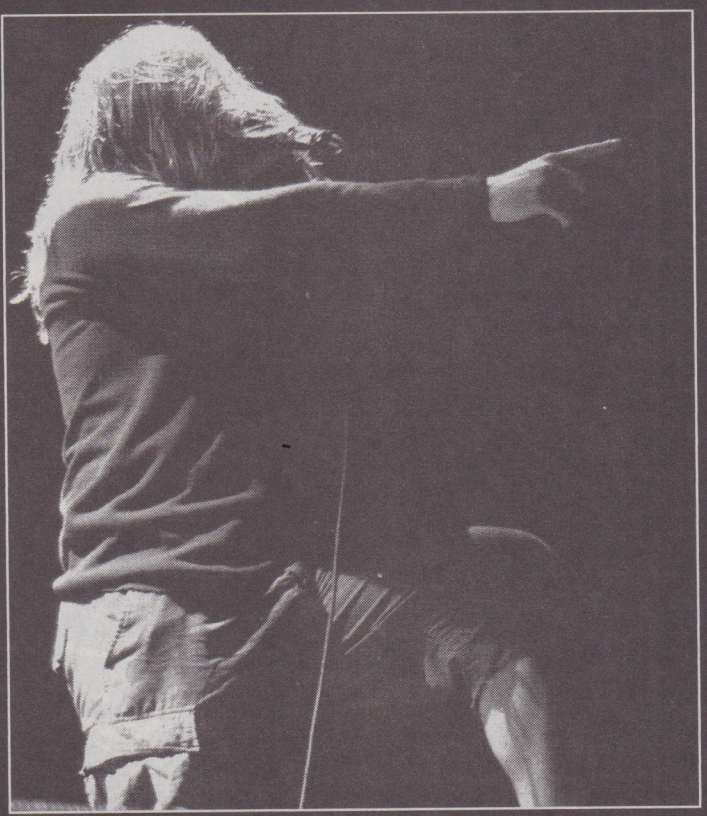
What singer/front man inspired you to want to be center stage?
It was a whole bunch. I started listening to KISS when I was 3. I just thought the duel singing between those guys was great, I really liked that dynamic so I used to play air guitar and sing along with the records when I was a kid. As I got older I got into Testament, Chuck Billy is a great front man. Phil Anselmo was a great front man back in his hey day. Tim from VOD, Carl from Earth Crisis- just a bunch of singers I kind of admired as I got older who made me realize that this is what I wanted to do.

You're from Boston. There's a pretty good metal and hardcore scene up there.
There's a ton of bands- a lot of competition! It's all friendly though. It actually helps make the bands better because if our friends put out a CD that sells a lot, and it's really good, it makes us want to try harder and make out CD better. It pushes all the bands to do more, I think.

You've been a band for close to a decade, but it's only recently that you've been starting to blow up. What do think it was that got people to start paying attention?





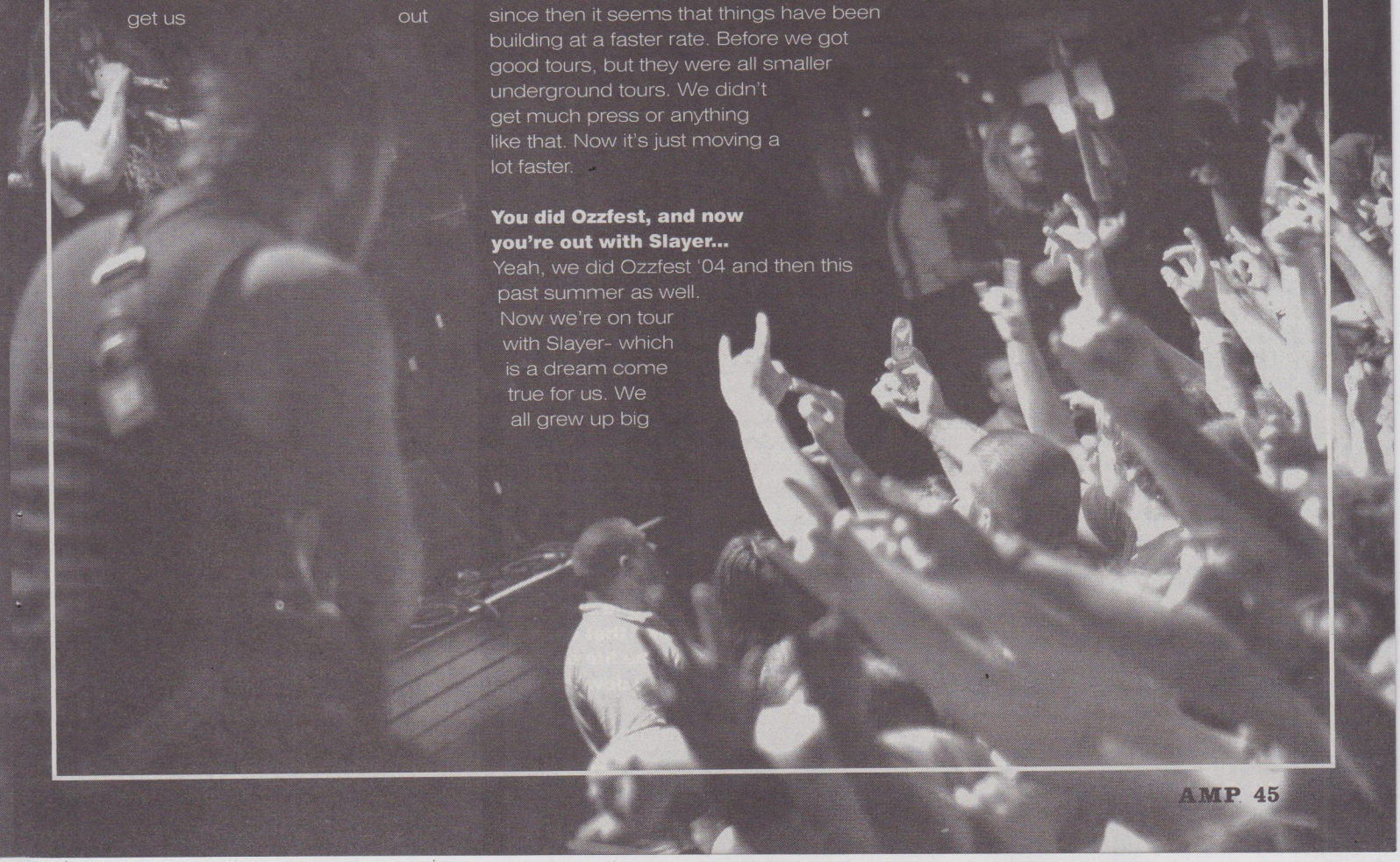


We've been a band for 8 years, and it was a long road up. We were on a real small label so we didn't have the backing from the label to help get us out there. We signed to Metal Blade in October of 2003 and put out our first record, which was our second full length but first for them, in June of '04. Ever since then it seems that things have been building at a faster rate. Before we got good tours, but they were all smaller underground tours. We didn't get much press or anything like that. Now it's just moving a lot faster.

You did Ozzfest, and now you're out with Slayer...

Yeah, we did Ozzfest '04 and then this past summer as well. Now we're on tour with Slayer- which is a dream come true for us. We all grew up big Slayer fans so it's a big deal for us.

Do you connect more with the older metal





bands than with the newer metalcore scene?
Personally, or just with the music itself?

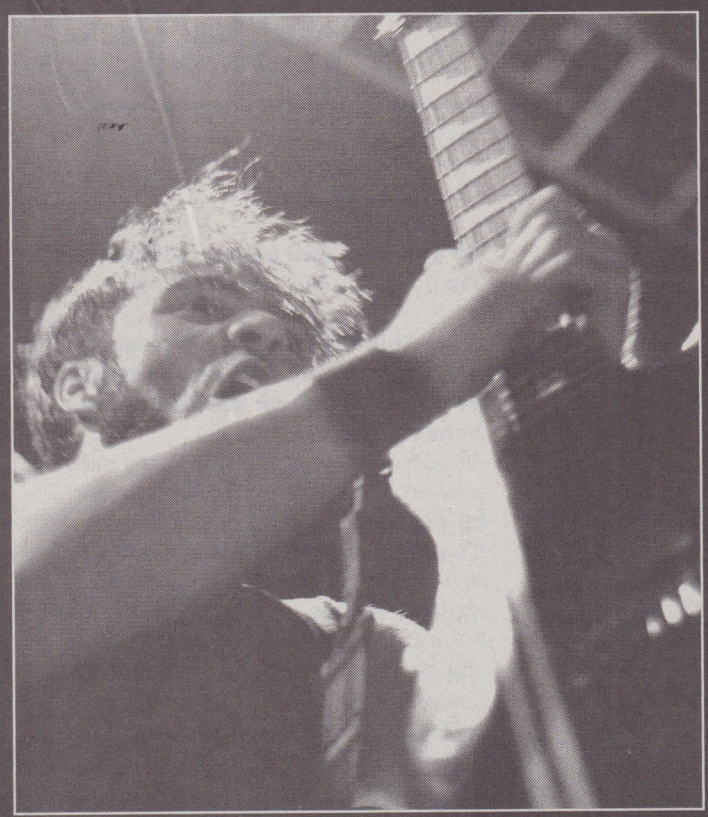
Both.
The older bands don't really hang out as much as the younger kids do. We'll see Kerry or Tom, and we'll hang out with them but besides that they pretty much keep to themselves, which is cool, they're all in the 40's or 50's, so I can see that. So, musically- yeah, I think I do (connect with older bands), but you always have to pay attention to what the younger bands are doing as well cause that's what the kids are into. You've got to have an open ear to that and let that inspire you so that you stay current as well. If you stay the same on every record they people get bored with you. You have to not so much reinvent yourself, but try to stay modern while keeping your roots at the same time.

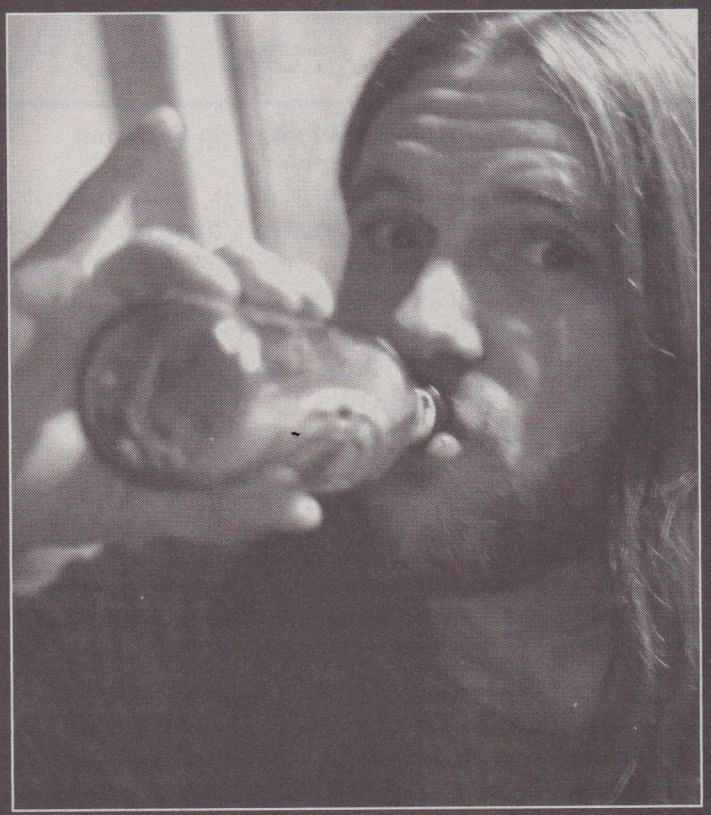
I notice on your latest record the music is really heavy which was a nice change from a lot of the metalcore I've heard recently- the whole sing/scream, hard then melodic thing. You stay hard all the way through. Is that you trying to avoid being lumped into the same category as some of the bands you've shared stages with?
That was a conscious decision on our part not to have the big singing choruses on this record. On the last record there were two songs that had singing parts in them, so we have the ability to do that but we just saw so many bands- friends of ours- that started out as a heavy band and then because they *can* sing they just fill every fuckin' song with a singing part. That's not what metal is, it's supposed to feel dangerous, and hard and heavy all the way through. It's cool to get soft here and there, but when you fill an entire record with it you're compromising the point of this style of music. So this record's a statement- you can still sell records and get tours even if you make a heavy balls out record, and that's why we made this record the way that we did.

When you think of Metal in its heyday, everything was wild and total debauchery. Is it still like that on tour? As a modern rocker, is the life on the road wild or has it tamed down over the years?
It's funny, we've had bus drivers that drove those buses back then and they're like 'you guys are a bunch of nerds!' (laughs) We'll party and we'll get drunk and rage with the best of 'em, but back then there were legions of groupies and tons of drugs- always a pile of cocaine on the table and most of the bands don't do any of that today. Guys'll find a girl here or there or whatever, but it's not like there are legions of groupies that come out for the guys, and there's no real drug use. You'll see people smoke pot once in awhile, but for the most part people just drink and have a good time. It's not like it was. I think disease and people smartening up changed all that, people thinking 'wait a minute, I'm living too fast' and everything just kind of disappeared like that (snaps) for them, healthwise. We have a great time though. We party, we drink very heavily. We drink too heavily, but it's fun. It keeps you sane while you're gone.

I've talked to so many different bands who say 'we get off the stage, get on the bus and play video games and then go to sleep.'
We don't do that, no!

Rock 'n' Roll has to have that dangerous side to it, that's what





draws people to it in the first place- especially if it's hard rock or metal. You read *Hammer of the Gods* and it's like 'Jesus, these guys were insane!' As a fan you want to romanticize in your head that that's what it's really like.

Yeah. I think with the hardcore drug use people are just smarter than that now. But there is a lot of drinking that goes on, I mean, we finish off 3 cases of beer and 2 handles of booze every night. We do rage and have a great time, but as far as cocaine goes it's just not for us. And as far as the groupies, they're just not here- I don't know why.

I don't know I there was a like a 45 year old woman hangin' outside your bus when I walked up.

If you see any girls it's usually older girls that are reliving the heyday or something. Younger girls will flirt with the guys, but it's not like you see on T.V.- it's not like Behind the Music with Def Leppard where there's 30 girls onstage every night.

You don't have the Metal moms trying to push their daughters onto you?

It was actually last night that a woman tried that. Her daughter had just turned 16 and she wanted her to hang out with us, and we were like 'no, we can't hang out with her she's 16, and that's creepy- you're her mom.' That was weird.

Can you share a memorable moment of a tour?

There's a lot of stories. We got to do 7 weeks with Damageplan, so we got to meet Dime and he was one of the coolest guys in the world. So many times on that tour he'd come hang out, roll dice with us and gamble. We were in Vegas once and he gave me a $100, he was like 'hey! Triple this, motherfucker!' I lost it, but it was still cool. He was just really down to earth, cool, fun guy.

We've done great tours. This one with Slayer- I got to smoke pot with Tom Araya. It was like 5 of us in the back lounge and I'm passing this huge blunt to Tom Araya and I was like, 'dude! My first concert was Slayer! I'm passing a blunt to fuckin' Tom Araya!' I didn't say that, I played it off cool, but I was like 'shit this is amazing!'

You must've felt like a kid.

I did! I was like, 'man, I must've made a right turn somewhere.' It felt fuckin' cool. That was probably the best part, aside from the shows being awesome, of the whole tour. And we drink Jager with Kerry all the time- he's big into Jager. He has this giant fuckin station- a giant flat screen T.V. and Playstation 3, and he has Madden and race car games and stuff, so we play him in games once in awhile- it's pretty cool.

So you do play video games when you get offstage.

(Laughs) While we're drinkin' and partyin' with Kerry King!

Describe, in 3 words, the feeling you get when you walk onto the stage and hear the crowd.

Pure adrenaline rush. If I don't get that rush then I'm not performing properly and my show's gonna be mediocre, but if I lose myself in the show and with the crowd it's the best feeling on earth. I get high off of it. I guess that's the real drug, I don't need the cocaine. I heard a funny story from Joe Perry of Aerosmith. I guess, they used to party so hard that the morning after the big parties he'd have to rip himself a big line of coke just to get goin'. I've felt like that before, just from drinking so much and it's like 'ugh, what would fix me'- cause you're so fuckin' shot. I imagine coke would do it, but I don't want to get hooked on that shit.

Cool. Well, that's about all I've got for ya. Thanks so much for talking with me.

Sure, thank you. You don't gotta run off right away, stay and finish your beer.

FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES

By John B. Moore / Group Photo By Eric Kaufman
Live Photos By Gaelen Harlacher

When From Autumn to Ashes front man Ben Perri walked out on the hardcore band in the early stages of recording their new record, many expected the band to simply implode. It's never easy to lose a member, but slogging on without your singer is more than most groups can fathom. But after a quick pep talk from their label and a wordy explanation on their MySpace page, the remaining members of FATA got right back to making their record. Drummer Fran Mark, who handles vocals in side project Biology, got off the stool and picked up the mic.

The resulting album, Holding a Wolf By The Ears, is a ferocious answer to anyone who doubted whether they could carry on without Perri.

Waiting to play a show in Detroit recently, Mark spoke in depth about the departure of Perri, the new record and the future of a band many thought was over.

Obviously the line-up has changed a bit since your last record. Did you guys have any idea that Ben was considering leaving the band?
It's something that's probably been developing for at least the last two years, I would say. It wasn't a very big surprise. It was a little upsetting the way that he went about it, giving such short notice, but other than that it wasn't very surprising.

Do you guys still keep in touch?
We do not, but for other reasons.

When this happened, as you were getting ready to record, was there ever any talk about breaking up the band?
No. Especially because he really didn't play an active role in the band, as far as writing or anything of that nature. It's a difficult thing to talk about. I don't want to completely discount anything he has done. (Long pause) For example, if the Queen of England stops showing up, there's not going to cease to be a country. Things go on and there are other people behind the



scenes that are handling the workload. It was just a little upsetting. We had already done all the pre-production for the record and had done all the demos and he hadn't really come for that, so I guess at that point, he already seemed like he had made up his mind and just hadn't told anybody.

Did you guys consider auditioning other singers or did you know right away that you could take over at the mic?
It was actually at Vagrant's immediate suggestion. They called us about 20 minutes after it all happened with Ben and said "Don't stress out about it, it's not a problem. Just finish the record. You sing, you'll get a new drummer and start touring." It was really helpful that they were so cool about it.

Did you consider doing the Phil Collins thing and strapping on the headset mic and drumming at the same time?
It would be funny, but I think for the style of music that we play it would make for a pretty boring live show if the singer was stationary behind a drum kit. Plus, to tell you the truth I never liked singing and drumming at the same time. It's just a pain in the ass and it hinders your drumming and it hinders your singing. They both make each other suffer really.

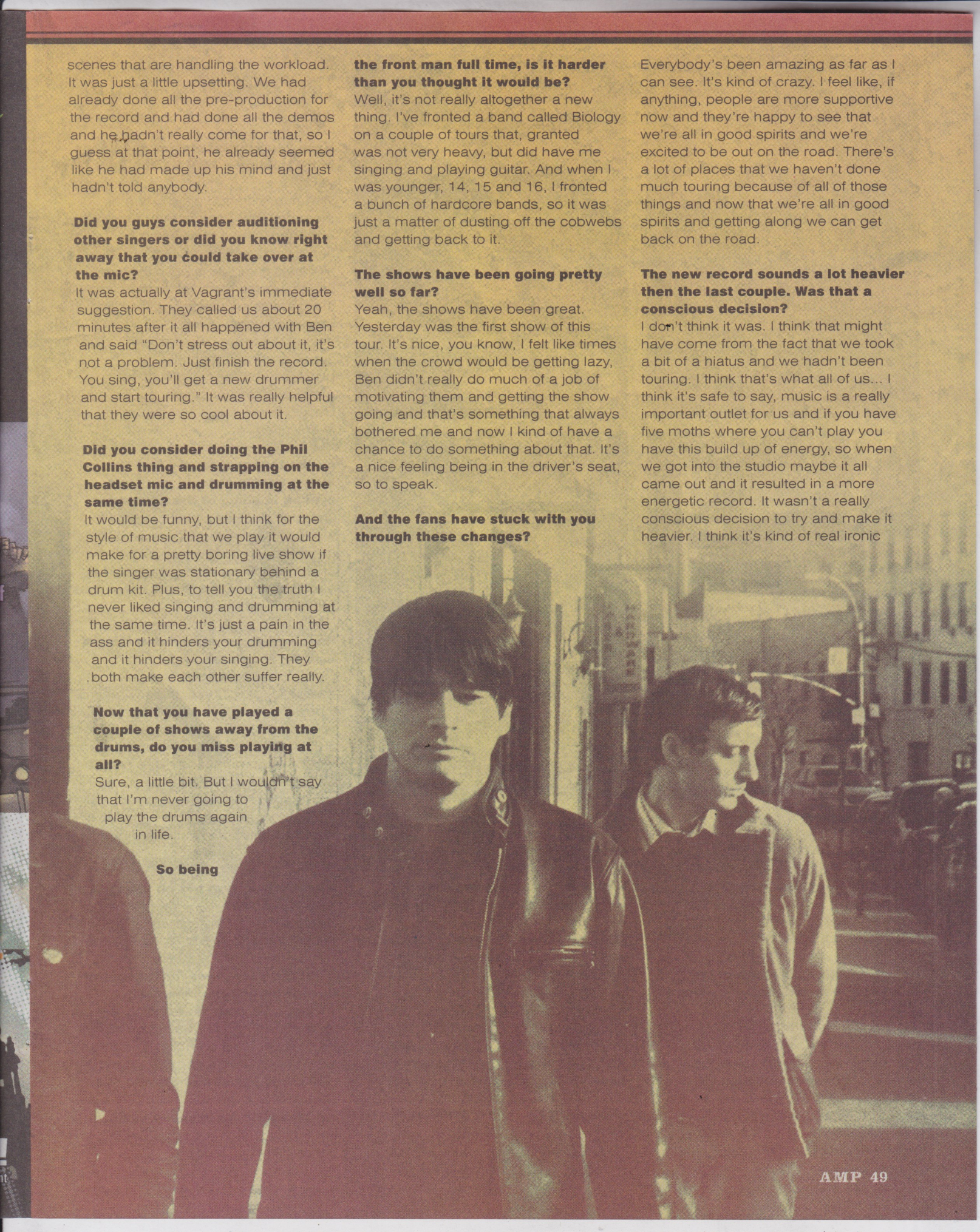
Now that you have played a couple of shows away from the drums, do you miss playing at all?
Sure, a little bit. But I wouldn't say that I'm never going to play the drums again in life.

So being the front man full time, is it harder than you thought it would be?
Well, it's not really altogether a new thing. I've fronted a band called Biology on a couple of tours that, granted was not very heavy, but did have me singing and playing guitar. And when I was younger, 14, 15 and 16, I fronted a bunch of hardcore bands, so it was just a matter of dusting off the cobwebs and getting back to it.

The shows have been going pretty well so far?
Yeah, the shows have been great. Yesterday was the first show of this tour. It's nice, you know, I felt like times when the crowd would be getting lazy, Ben didn't really do much of a job of motivating them and getting the show going and that's something that always bothered me and now I kind of have a chance to do something about that. It's a nice feeling being in the driver's seat, so to speak.

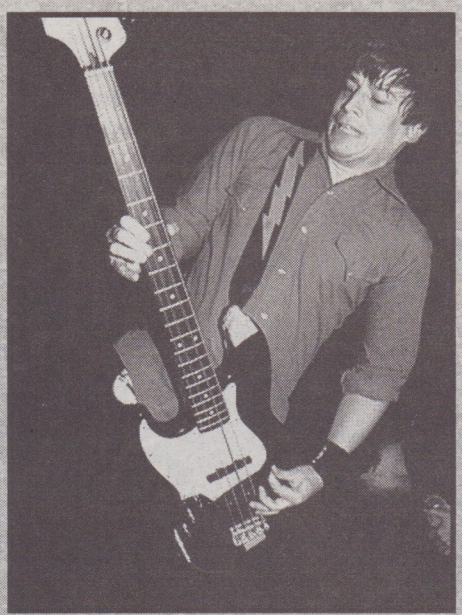
And the fans have stuck with you through these changes?
Everybody's been amazing as far as I can see. It's kind of crazy. I feel like, if anything, people are more supportive now and they're happy to see that we're all in good spirits and we're excited to be out on the road. There's a lot of places that we haven't done much touring because of all of those things and now that we're all in good spirits and getting along we can get back on the road.

The new record sounds a lot heavier then the last couple. Was that a conscious decision?
I don't think it was. I think that might have come from the fact that we took a bit of a hiatus and we hadn't been touring. I think that's what all of us... I think it's safe to say, music is a really important outlet for us and if you have five moths where you can't play you have this build up of energy, so when we got into the studio maybe it all came out and it resulted in a more energetic record. It wasn't a really conscious decision to try and make it heavier. I think it's kind of real ironic











that the screamer dude leaves the band and the band gets heavier. I don't think anybody was expecting that.

So you're pleased with how it's turned out?
Oh man, more pleased than anything we've ever done, I think.

Do you feel like everyone in the band now wants to be here doing this?
Yeah, we're definitely all on the same page now. I think when the leader of your band doesn't want to be there and he's not passionate about what he's doing, that's going to bring down everybody's desire to play really. So now that everybody's on the same page it's really coming across in our live shows. They've gotten much stronger. Even just hanging out being on the bus is nicer.

You guys have been together for seven years straight now. How has the band changed?
Well, we've had a few people come and go in the quest to find the right combination of guys and I think the band has certainly changed drastically. When we started the band, nobody ever expected it to get so big. I was only really 19 years old when we first started to get a lot of recognition and personally speaking I didn't know how to cope with all of that and so you just get caught up in some of that stuff. I think we've changed to the point that all of that stuff is completely irrelevant now and really the main focus is on the music and getting up and having a good time. That's how it should be really.

Have you started playing the songs of off Holding a Wolf By The Ears live yet?
We've only started playing two of them because, personally, I get pretty bummed when I go to see a band that has a catalogue of records out and all they want to do is push their new songs. It's really not fair to the people that have been supporting them for years and years. Since the record's not out yet we're only previewing two songs and we're actually playing some really old stuff. It's a pretty even mix of songs, but we're playing some of the first songs we'd ever written.

As the tour progresses and the album comes out will you start cycling in some of the new songs?
Certainly. I'd like to think that when the record comes out people will be requesting the newer songs over the older ones. If we've done any sort of good job writing the record I think that will be the case.

How would you describe Holding a Wolf By The Ears?
I think that it's probably the most energetic, passionate, thrashy record that we've ever done. I still stand behind everything that we've ever done and I think that all of our albums are a good documentation of the people we were when we wrote them and recorded them, but this one just makes me feel good. Every time I listen to it I like it a little more, which is a good sign.

Who are you guys out on the road with right now?
Haste the Day, Maylene and the Sons of Disaster and The Sleeping.

What are your plans for the rest of the spring and the summer?
I'm not sure what we're going to do for the summer yet, but when this tour is over we'll be going to Europe and the UK for about three weeks, play some festivals and some club shows over there. Summer plans are still tentative. We're waiting to lock something down, so hopefully we'll get something good.

BILLY WERNER OF

HOT CROSS

Interview & Photography By Dan Gonyea

Behold the youth! Hot Cross is back with the first full length since *Chronics*. After two takes of recording, their new album *Risk Revival* is out on Equal Vision Records. With tour dates stacked up and plans to go overseas, it looked like Hot Cross is as revived and kicking as ever. In the calm before the storm, vocalist Billy Werner talked to us about all their upcoming plans as he took a stroll down the street.

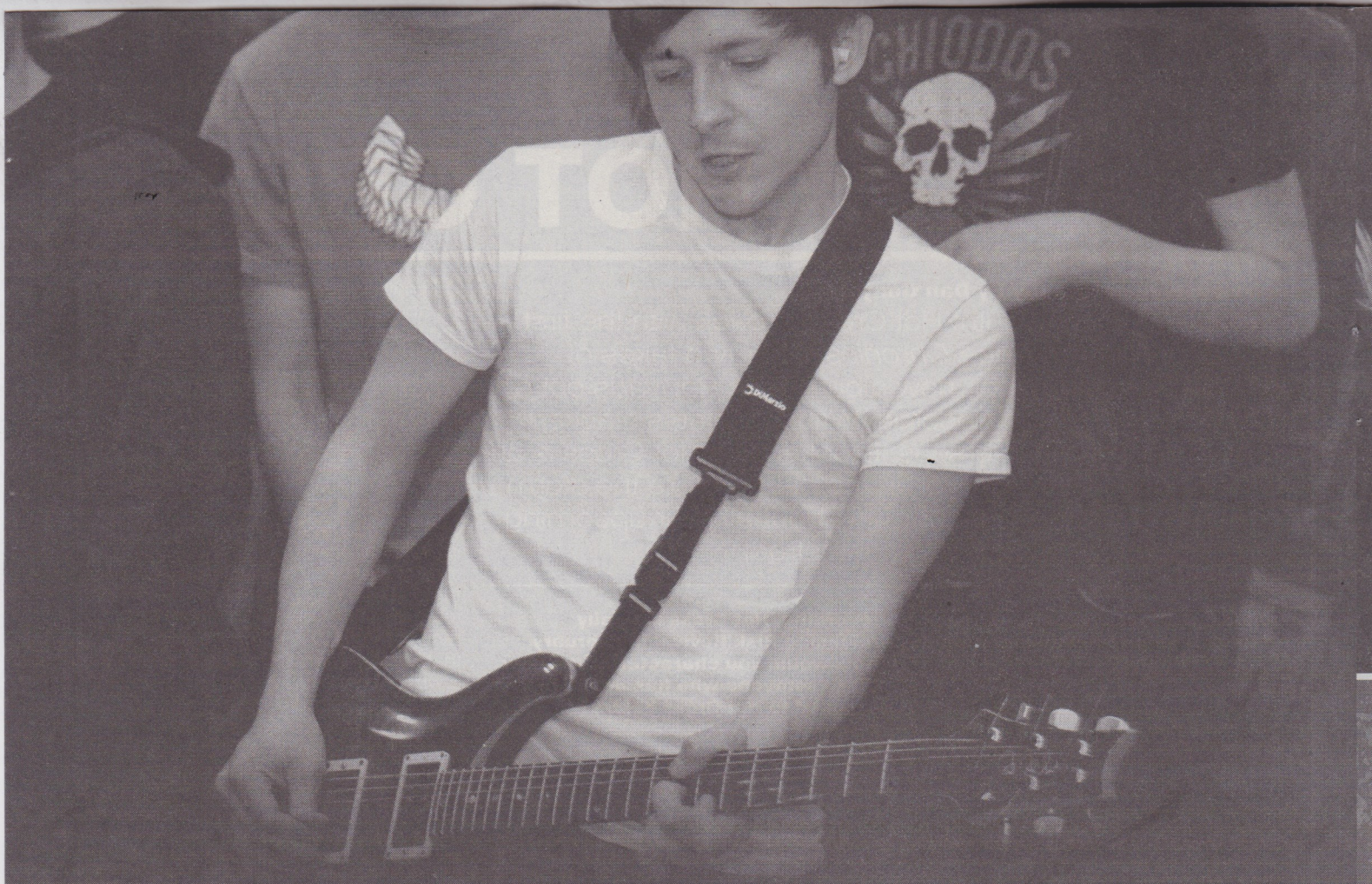
What is Hot Cross currently up to right now, except for walking around downtown Philly?
laugh Well, we're in the process of booking shows to and from SXSW. We'll be there on the 17th of March. We're just putting those together to get down there and get back up to the Midwest for shows. Unfortunately, we won't be hitting the west coast this time around. Also, we're planning a UK tour at the end of June which would be the last week of that month. Other than that, we're just gearing up for this record. It's finally coming out!

After a few years and two times recording, Hot Cross is finally releasing Risk Revival in February. How would you characterize the new CD to someone who has not been exposed to Hot Cross before?
It's actually probably the heaviest record we've ever done. The recording is great. I guess how I would describe it is kind of like a modern take on hardcore. Some people are calling it "post-hardcore," though I'm not really sure what that means. Those with a rock influence and experimental side may be interested in what we do.

How did you approach Risk Revival lyrically?
Originally this record was going to be about western death rituals and mourning and my ideas on those things. When I was originally fifteen or sixteen, I experienced a lot of family loss. After that, I had a friend who passed away in my early 20s. Those kind of issues really haunted me, and I never really decided if I had dealt with those losses the right way. With this record, I feel like I have dealt with it the right way. Western culture puts pressures to deal with death in a very specific way, and I don't think those were really the best ways for me to deal with them. It's not fair for people to handle those things in one way. The record was supposed to be all about that, but over time, I was writing about a whole bunch of things. You'll see that theme in the record but will also see other elements come into it. I always write what is relevant to me at the time. Thankfully, that wasn't the only thing I was thinking about over the course of writing this stuff. You'll see that theme of feeling lost run through the record though.

Is there any story or theme behind your album art for Risk Revival?
We wanted our friend Miles to be involved and do the artwork. We told





him what the title was and all the song titles. We didn't tell him about what any of the songs were about or anything. We wanted to challenge him and see what came out. From the few things we told him, that's what came out, and we were really blown away. They are amazing pieces of art and it worked out very well. The art is basically just an interpretation of a few words we gave him.

In what ways has Hot Cross improved the most since Chronics?
I think we finally found out what we want in a recording very specifically, being that we had to record the album a couple times. Over the process, it became clear what we were looking for. Something I found while making records is that it's really difficult to translate how a band sounds to a recording well. It's very important to get that transfer. You have to be on top of a lot of details. In the past, we weren't concerned with that so much. Dealing with what we want is definitely a growth as a band. It shows that we know what our priorities are. I think this is the best recording we've ever had. The writing on all our records have improved, but I feel this record we know where our band has a specific sound that people can expect when they hear our record. We're pretty excited. Wherever we improved, I know wherever I have improved has just been from experience and getting it right.

Album leaking online has been a huge controversy lately with bands like Fall Out Boy having thousands of copies downloaded online before their release. When Risk Revival got leaked, how did you react?
Yeah, it leaked on like the fifteenth of January, which is almost a month before release. We had a lot of conversations with the label about it. It was pretty inevitable that it was going to leak so it wasn't really a surprise. Even if the CD has protection or whatever and goes out to the world, it's pretty inevitable that it's going to get ripped and leaked. We were expecting it to happen so it wasn't that big of a deal. A band at our level... Well, I wouldn't say that we directly benefit from leaking, but it does open doors to other opportunities and fans we wouldn't have otherwise. They can check out the record for free. It's really a double-edged sword. We've had conversations about it. We were bummed that it leaked, but it would have been even worse if it leaked and nobody cared. It seemed like people who have heard the record have been responding positively to it like 95% of the time. You have to pick it with a grain of salt. In our case, it seems to have generated a little bit of hype. People have been preordering the CD, and we do get emails about when the vinyl is coming out and stuff. I don't think it is going to hurt our sales as much as a band like Fall Out Boy. Even then, that's the difference between Fall Out Boy selling like a million 5 and a million 3 records. Does it really matter? In our level, if it introduces people to the band early and get excited for shows, we can't be too upset about it. It would be nice to just have the record come out and have everyone stoked and go to the record store that set day for it, but it's 2007 and release dates are arbitrary at this point.

Have you been considering any alternative ways of getting your music out there like music videos, since your label is a larger label with those options available?
The option is really open to us. The great thing about Equal Vision is that they leave the option up to us. It's not like they said like before this record, you guys need to tour six months out of the year. It was never any situation like that. They were like, "We really like the band and want to be involved with this band. You can play 3 shows or 300 shows this year. Do what you want." They've been like that in regards to everything, not just touring. They say that if we want to do a video, just let them know. It's cool

because they let us do our thing. All those things are available to us. We're trying to figure out what's going to be best for us as a band to put money into. We don't want to do all these things and have none of them result in anything. We are just trying to take time and determine the best course of action for the stuff available to us. We just haven't decided yet on what's the best idea.

Is Hot Cross by any means involved in political or charitable organizations?
We're not directly involved in any organizations, but there are definitely issues that we tackle on the record. There's one song about health care in the United States. It's an issue that I haven't thought too much about but have been affected with recently. I was with someone who needs to be medicated daily and didn't have health insurance for a long time. To use state-funded resources to fund their health care was a nightmare. That got me really interested in that, and I looked into the amount of people who don't have health insurance. It's startling! All these people who can't afford health care for themselves or their children. I'm interested in seeing what kind of non-profit organizations are out there for that. Other than that, everyone in the band has their own ideas of what they support and such. Hot Cross is a kind of band that everyone can get something out of. We aren't really a band that is extremely political or anything. This world is constantly full of people that are preaching constantly. We're not one of these bands that needs to stand on a box and say, "You need to live your life this way." We haven't found the need to go out of our way and write the token anti-war song because of that. We play a ton of benefit shows while we're on tour, and if we're asked to play at a charity show, we usually will if it's something we believe in. In terms of direct involvement, we're not really about expressing something so blatantly through our music. We're not apolitical, but we are more interested in being political individuals. If people are interested in talking about it, come talk to us. We don't feel like we need to be one of those bands who speaks out against George Bush or whatever. Do we really need another one of those?

What have been some of your favorite newer albums to come out by other bands?
This is funny because this goes back right to your question about CDs leaking! I'm probably biting my own hand right now but I just recently acquired a copy of that new Arcade Fire CD. I can say that the CD is incredible! I was a person who thought their last record was incredibly boring and never understood that band, but that new album is really exciting. As of today, I can say that their new CD is kicking my ass in a good way. I really like the new The Shins record a lot. In terms of hardcore and punk records, I really liked that Criminal Damage record that came out last year. [inaudible] The Liars record last year was really good, and they're a band that I wasn't really into before. I really liked the last The Hope Conspiracy record too. I can't stand when people say that there isn't any good CDs coming out, because I feel that the last year and a half has been unreal. I've been very broke because I have been spending more on records than I have in the past few years. There's a lot of good quality records coming out.

If you could play a show tonight with any bands, who would you want to be on the show?
That's a good question! I guess I would love to play with The Hope Conspiracy. I've never seen them before. I would love to play with them just to get to see them. I would love to play with the Mars Volta too just to sit at the side of the stage and watch. Their last record was a little much for me though. I was a huge At The Drive-In fan too so I like to see those guys in action up close. One of the all-time great bands to play with is Fugazi, but whether or not they are done is debatable. I don't think that's ever going to happen. I think those three cover it.

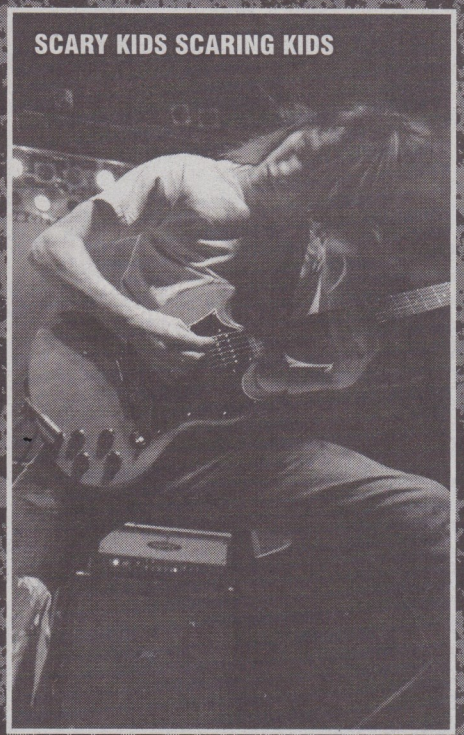
Is it awkward at all that you have your own Wikipedia entry online with a small bio about you?
Yeah, yeah it's weird. It's funny because a bunch of friends screw with it all the time. If you've seen the entry more than once, it's constantly changing. People keep writing ridiculous shit on it. It was a little weird. Wikipedia in itself is a little weird. Me being on it is definitely strange. *laugh*

TAKE ACTION TOUR

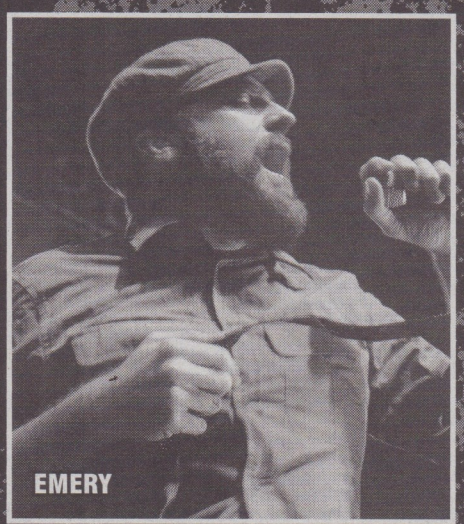
Photography By Jason Rowley


A STATIC LULLABY


KADDISFLY


SCARY KIDS SCARING KIDS

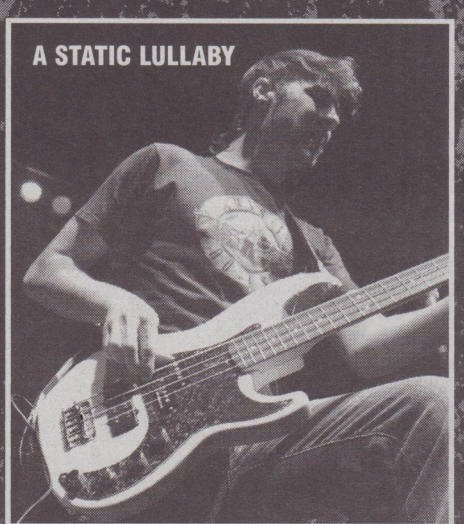

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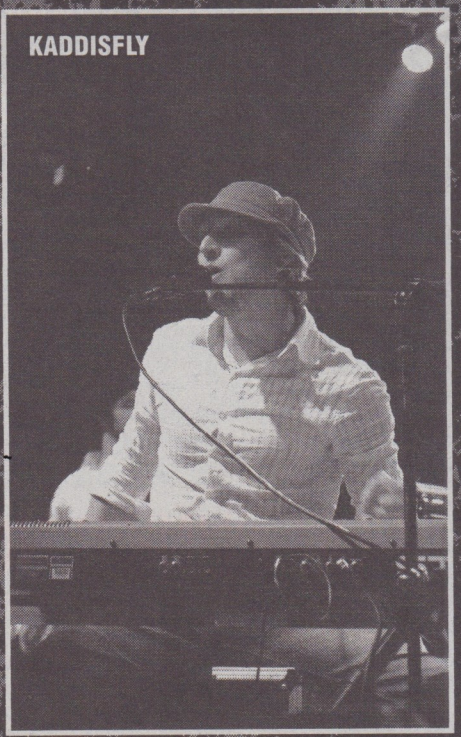

RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS


KADDISFLY

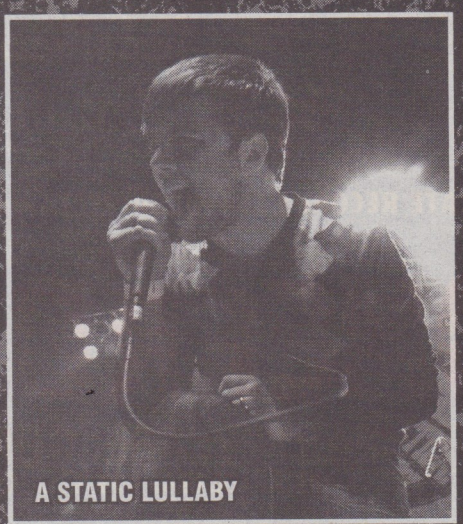

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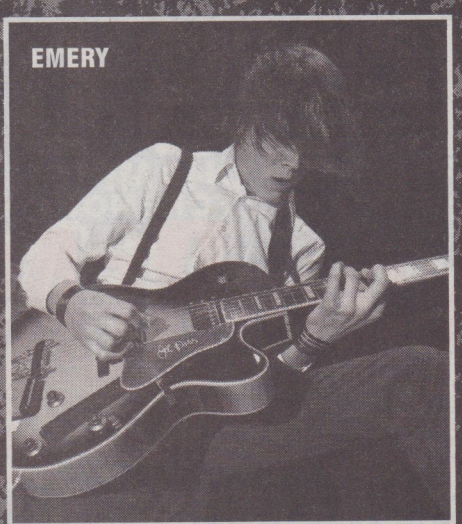

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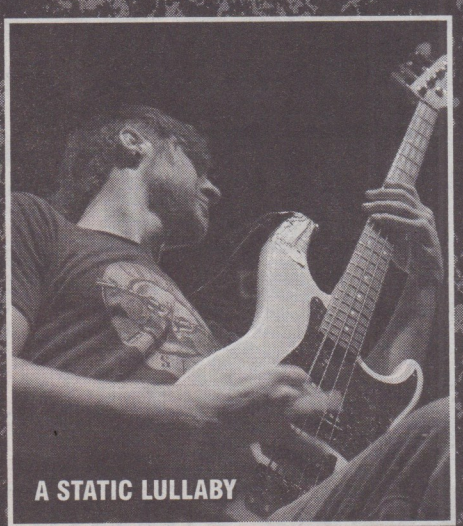

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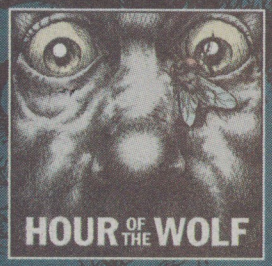

SCARY KIDS SCARING KIDS


SCARY KIDS SCARING KIDS


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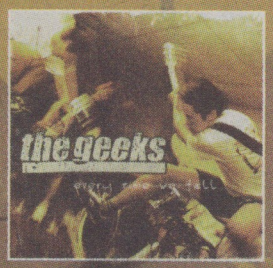
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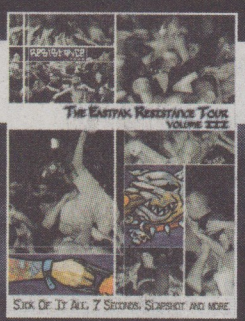
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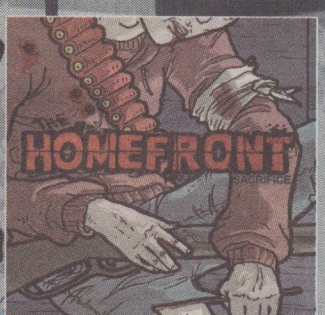
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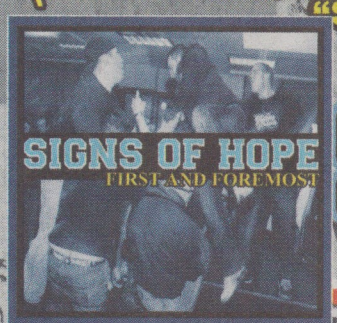
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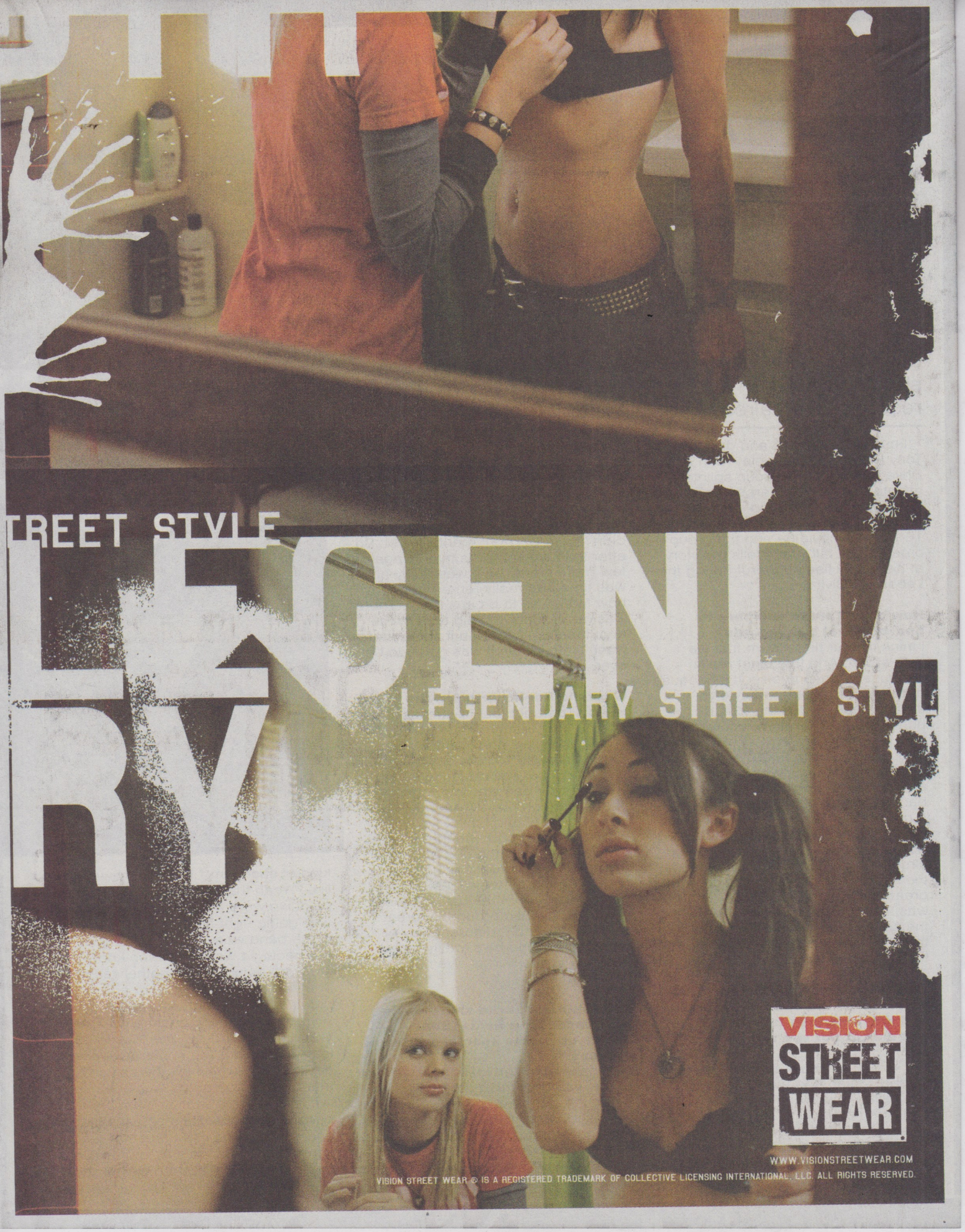
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SPARTA

By John B. Moore

Sparta's latest record nearly wasn't. After breaking off with their record label, aborting their tour half way into it, and the defection of guitarist Paul Hinojos, who left to join former band mates in Mars Volta, Sparta was pretty close to slamming the lid shut. But after a much- needed break, some internal reflection and the addition of new guitarist Keeley Davis, they decided to give it another shot, soldiered on and ended up turning in the strongest record of their already critically-lauded career.

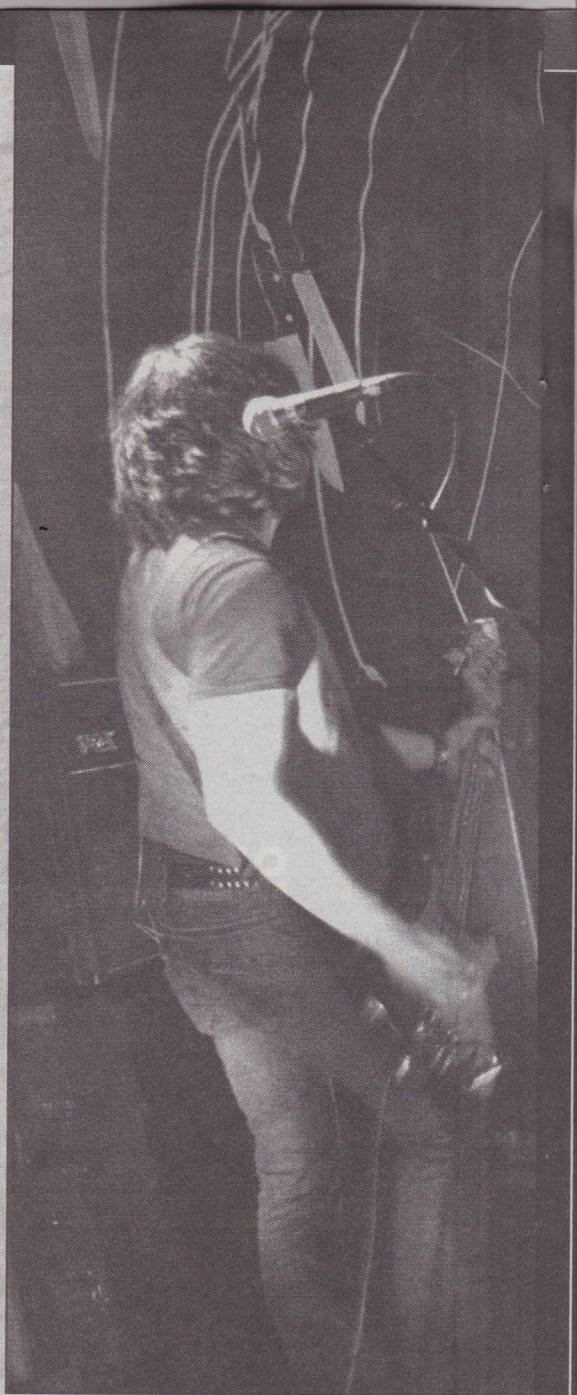


PHOTO: JEN CRAY

Founding member and drummer Tony Hajjar, who also played in At The Drive In before that group splintered off into Sparta and Mars Volta, talked recently about the band's near demise. Hajjar also spoke about the 16-minute movie he and the group created last fall which tells the story of his family fleeing Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War.

How does Threes compare to Sparta's first two records?

I think it's our first album that we didn't rush. And that's not really because of anyone else. It's because of ourselves. It's the way we've always been. It was the tour, go home and start writing, record and tour again cycle. Since a lot of things happened to us in 2005, it made us slow down because we weren't even sure if we were still going to be a band, from leaving Geffen to losing a member to leaving a tour... it was a lot of stuff. Anything that could possibly lead to breaking up a band almost happened to us. But we took the right breaks and it just worked out great and I think the big difference was that time and we got to work on the songs three or four times, through three or four versions, and the time let the songs breathe a bit.

Was there ever a period during the break when the band got together and had a serious talk about whether or not you would break up?

We kind of got back together and started writing and then we brought out Keeley. I wouldn't really call it an audition, he just kind of came out because we had known him, and he was in really good spirits and excited to be there and we were just not in the same ballpark and we realized at that point that we should stop again. That was in May of 2005 and we decided, "This guy is all happy to be here and we should be excited to be writing" and we weren't. We knew we didn't have the right mentality yet. So after that, we said let's try this again a few more times. All it was really about was time and really remembering how fun it was to be in a band. There was never really the big talk. It was about feeling it out and if someone wasn't into it then it was going to be over.

What did Keeley bring to the band?

He total brought that freshness in and he also brought that reminder of how lucky we are. You tend to forget because you get used to things and then all of a sudden, if you let yourself, you can start complaining. That's just horrible. We've never been that way and I think we were slowly going to become that and that would have been the end of our band because we've never been those types of people. Keeley just really helped us remember just how lucky we were. He also brought in great songwriting and a different way of doing things and he's totally faded into how we do things. We needed that fresh start.

Let's talk about the short movie you made "Eme Nakia" that shows up on the special edition of "Threes."

Originally it was an idea I had. At kind of the worst time that the band was going through, in April of 2005, a few weeks after coming back from that tour that we had to cancel, I called everyone and said "How about for the next record we try to do some kind of short film." Everybody was like, "Yeah that sounds good." At that point we were a three piece, nothing was going right and I think everybody in the band was kind of giggling at me because we didn't even know if we were going to do another record. They asked me about what and I didn't really know. I just wanted to bring that aesthetic back, a la "The Wall." Jim called me like 10 minutes later and said, "You know, if we ever get to do a film, I think the only thing that it should be about is your life." We had about a year to meet the right people. My cousin is a screenwriter and an actor; he's the one that really convinced me to do it as professional as possible. That's when we started



hiring people, got a budget...

Were you happy with how it turned out?
I was really happy with how it turned out. I think we put everything into it that we wanted to have. It's a family story and a political story at the same time. It's showing people that when you're watching CNN and you see dead people on the floor, you can't just turn off the TV because you might know those people. You need to know that there are other people that are affected by this that might live next to you. That was one of the big points of the film.

Have you thought about turning this into a much longer film?
Never about the same topic, to be honest. I'm done. It was very difficult to do the film because I had the label counting on me, I had the band counting on me and I had my family to please. It was really difficult, but I got so much trust from everyone.

Have you been back to Lebanon since you and your family left?
No, I haven't, but I'm hoping to go back in the next couple of years. You can't go back and just spend a week or two, you have to go back and spend a month and when I do have that time hopefully I will.

Why did you go back to Texas to write the record?
El Paso isn't as easy as LA to find things like a rehearsal space, but if you want to find an open space or open warehouse, that's the place to go and we found a great warehouse and we literally drove down everything that we owned that we thought we could be creative with. Every instrument, every non-instrument, every piece of recording gear that we have and we just set up shop. We spent some days two hours, if nothing was going on, and some days 12 hours if we had a million ideas. The plan was don't bring a note in, we're just going to jam and that's where almost every single song on the record came from. It was the most



PHOTO: JEN CRAY

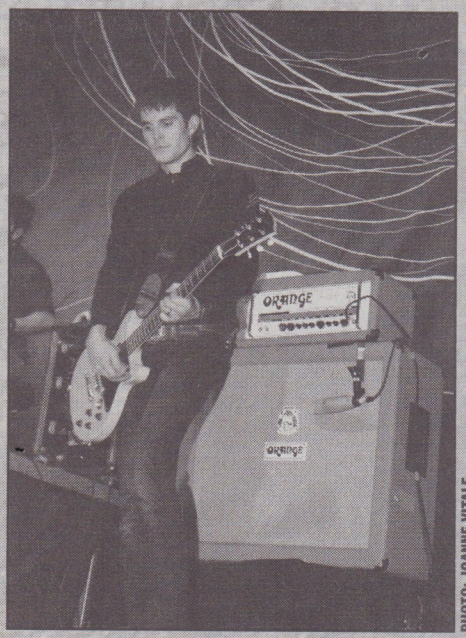


PHOTO: JOANNE VITALE

productive time we ever had. We ended up writing almost 30 songs. We have another record pretty much on a hard drive that hasn't been recorded officially. It was just so nice to be that productive.

Was there anything that you and the other guys in the band were listening while you were writing "Threes" that may have inspired some of the playing?
We all listen to all kinds of different stuff, but some people are more influenced by certain bands than others. My biggest move, always before I write my part, is listening to Led Zeppelin. I am very, very obsessed with them. It's just one of the reasons that made me continue to play and continue reaching for more whether it's live or in the studio. That's pretty much all I listen to when I am creating, to be honest. I try not to listen to any music, but sometimes you need something to help you out and I'd rather listen to something that holds that kind of ground.

As a drummer, you could do a whole lot worse then tapping into John Bonham.
Exactly. Who else should I do that with?

This is your first album off Geffen. What made you decide to go with Hollywood Records?
We did the first record with DreamWorks. While we were recording the next record we got the call that they had been sold to Interscope. We also heard that 40 of the 60 bands were getting dropped. We knew for sure we were getting dropped. We sold 120,000 records at that point and there were bands that had sold way more than us, but we never got that call that we were being let go. We met everyone at Interscope and played that game then all of a sudden they divided up again and we got shipped to Geffen and had to play the game of meeting everyone with Geffen. At that point our next record was ready to come out and we got lied to and crushed pretty much. They said, let's start working on the third record and we told them we'd rather be a garage band than be on their label, so we left. I think later, one of the things that crushed us in a sense was that we felt homeless on that last one. Thank God we (left). That was one of the best things we did, leaving that label.

Have you had any problems since signing to Hollywood?
Hollywood's been very, very supportive and great to us. I have zero complaints about this label. And it's the only label that I've been on that I've had zero complaints about.

They're really trying to beef up their rock reputation, aren't they?
Yeah. They need us as much as we need them, if that makes any sense. It is really mutual. We needed a label that has power and money and didn't have a lot of rock acts and they needed a band that... we're very, very blessed and lucky to be respected and they needed that too. What made us feel really good was when we turned in the record and they were beyond pleased. It was way more than they expected.

You don't still keep in touch with any of your former band mates from At The Drive In, do you?
No, not at all.

What are your plans for the summer?
We are actually making those plans now. We are right now on tour with mewithoutyou and Aloha and then that stops and we are touring across Canada with a Canadian band called Moneen, then we take two weeks off and fly out to Europe for a few weeks to play some festivals. We are really excited about that because we haven't gone to Europe on this record yet.

You had mentioned earlier that you've written enough songs for a new record. Will that be coming out soon?
No, there's no plans right now. There has been very, very small talk about eventually taking some of those songs and recording them properly and maybe doing an EP or something, but at this point there's no time. It's just so nice to have them. It's so nice to know that they're there, because we've never had that. It's really exciting that we can come back to those songs and either think that they're horrible or think that a few of them can be fixed and turned into songs.

So the band is in a pretty good place right now?
Oh, absolutely... There's always ups and downs in every kind of relationship. Obviously this is different because there are so many more personalities than in a regular relationship, but it's always worked out and we're in a really good place right now.

DIE YOUNG (TX)

By John B. Moore / Photography By NutterPhotog.com

Five years into their quest to take Lone Star hardcore to every conceivable corner of the world, (yup, Iceland included) the guys in Die Young (TX) are just getting started. With more blistering guitars and throat shredding vocals, the band is on the verge of releasing their third full length, Graven Images. Front man and co-founder the Rev. White Devil spoke to AMP about rocking in Malaysia, American political history and Canadian boarder guards.

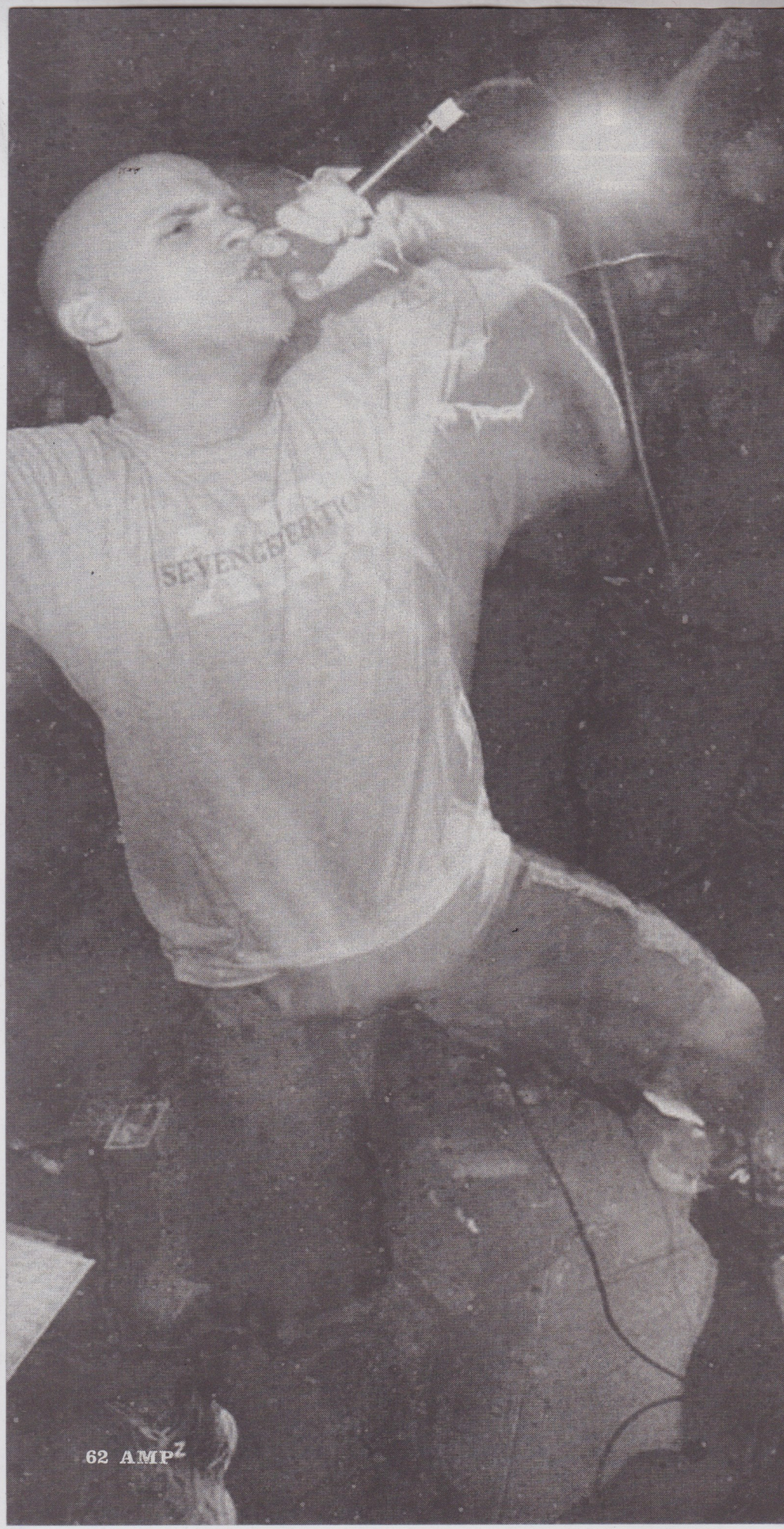
Let's start out by talking about Graven Images. How does this new record compare to the last few?

I am very proud of the new record for many reasons. I think what sets it apart from the past records is that the songwriting is more concentrated, and there's a bit more emphasis on the guitar parts. By that I mean that there are more dual guitar parts, and more solos than in the past, which as a whole adds a more melodic element to the album. For the people out there who never really caught on to Die Young's music in the past because our band was too "message over music," I would say this album speaks the universal language of music a bit more strongly, and I'd say it almost as much music as it is message. Don't get me wrong though, the lyrics and the overall message have not been compromised in the slightest.

Being a hardcore band from Texas, you must get plenty of lyrical inspiration from Bush and his administration.

Generally, I think anyone in any part of the world could potentially get lyrical inspiration, a nice way to put it, from the Bush administration. After all, the policies he and his buddies enact, and the decisions they make pretty much affect the entire world. The fact that he's from Texas is really irrelevant to me. He could be from any other state, or any other country and it wouldn't really change my opinion of him. However, though he's a figurehead for the current administration, the Republican Party, and the war, and so on, I think much of everyone's tendency to just point the finger at Bush and his administration is incredibly short-sighted. I'm not trying to defend Bush by any means. I am just trying to say this: take him out of the picture, and put someone else in the oval office. Do you think things would really change so drastically? I think the problem really is more that of a representative system that





is constantly failing us because it doesn't really represent us at all, and to be honest, it was never really supposed to. Looking back on American history, I think there are very few Presidents, or Senators even, who most of us wouldn't point our fingers at with disdain. Though I certainly think Bush is among the worst of the bunch, he's not the root of the problem. After all, there's no way a simpleton like him could have come into such power if it were not for a system already having power monopolized into such a small segment of the population. He wound up there because a very wealthy and powerful minority wanted him there. I really hope more Americans, as individuals, can begin to try and examine the roots of our system here, because it is going to continue on just like it is no matter who is president if we don't fundamentally change the entire fucking thing from the foundation up.

How did you end up getting banned from Canada for a year?

We did nothing wrong. Basically, the border guards who handled our papers that day had something stuck in their asses and they were fucking jerks. Plain and simple. When it comes to getting paid to be a raging asshole, is there a better job around than being a Border Patrol agent?

Boarder problems aside, you guys have done a lot of touring outside the US. Is hardcore big in Latin American and Asia?

Most of the shows we have played outside have been to fairly large-sized crowds. I don't know if that is to say the scene is "big" there, but it definitely means that kids come out to support and have a good time when foreign bands come to their home, whether they are kids who like punk, hardcore, metal, or just whacky music in general. For all of those experiences we have been and always will be deeply thankful. In a lot of ways, the kind of community I've seen while playing in places like Singapore, or Thailand, or Costa Rica, just to name a few, have reaffirmed



for me personally just how much of a positive impact hardcore and punk can make in kids' lives. Kids in other parts of the world may not be able to afford quality gear or a polished pro-tools recording, but they make this music anyway. They may not have the big touring bands coming through every week, or every month, or every year even, but they still work together putting on their own shows in makeshift spaces, sharing equipment. They make zines, put out records, and all, that, just like over here, but they just don't have money for advertising campaigns or simply getting their albums manufactured, so they do everything by hand, which is often yields something really special. They make do with what they have. For example, in Malaysia hardcore shows often get shut down for being suspected of being "black metal," which is illegal there, but the kids continue to put shows in the most random of places, by word of mouth - since flyers will attract authorities and get shows shut down. In a sense, I think the North American scene has a lot to learn from the spirit of hardcore in other places, especially the non-western and developing parts of the world where hardcore exists, and though I can't say that the scenes there are exactly big in quantity, I definitely think they are big in heart and "quality." The spirit of this music truly is universal.

You guys have built up a rep for being on the road more often than not - does touring ever get old?

It hasn't yet gotten old to me. I still think there are so many more places to see, and kids to play for and connect with. But sure, touring has certainly gotten old to the long list of dudes who decided to quit this band. I don't think it is so much the traveling aspect that got old for them, but rather the fact that we're always broke, and quite often the shows themselves aren't reward enough for being "thirsty and miserable." Most of us have accumulated some major debt over the years simply by being devoted to this band. That's something that can hang over your head and stress you out, for sure--no matter how much fun you might have every night. But as I said, touring is something I am still personally optimistic about. I prefer being on the move. There's a certain peace to the constant hustle and bustle, kind of like birds migrating. And I don't know any other way I would be out seeing the world, not at this point in my life anyway. Plus, I keep thinking 'I can't foresee a time when I have to go back to work!' when we're always touring, so that helps me maintain a gleeful outlook about staying out on the road.

What are your plans for the rest of the year?

Constant touring, ha. The new album will be out in the US in mid-March and a couple weeks later on Alveran over in Europe, so we'll be sure to hit up everywhere except Canada, since we're banned and all, in support of it. Come August we'll be heading over to Europe finally, and part of that trip may include a stop-over for some shows in Iceland, which I am really keeping my fingers crossed about. By the end of the year I hope to get us back down to Latin America. I don't know, there's just so many places to go. We'll definitely be back over to Asia as soon as we possibly can, but I don't foresee that happening by the end of this year due to how much money we will have to save to pull that off again.





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AL QUINT

February Entry:

I have a tendency to complain about things. I talk about how, over the past year or so, my life seems to be on a losing streak and it's not just minor stuff, either. The downstairs of our house getting flooded last May (though it only required us to replace the carpeting), having dental work that involved getting six crowns and two root canals, plumbing problems—both a busted pipe under the sink and frozen pipes a few weeks ago, computer difficulties, a dead TV, car problems, tire troubles, etc etc. Just one thing after another and it's taken a toll emotionally and in our bank account. Plus my wife Ellen had to deal with some health issues and leaving a job that left her on the verge of mental and physical collapse, then dealing with the process of finding a new job. On the positive side, Ellen found a new job just before Christmas, we've both lost weight and we still have a roof over our heads, there's food on the table and heat in the house (except when the pipes froze!).

Now that's something that should never be taken for granted—having a roof over your head. And not just a roof—we've got a pretty nice house. Homelessness is obviously a large-scale problem. As I walked back to my car from a basement show the other night, I was shivering and wondered how anyone could survive in that kind of bitter cold. I only had to walk a few blocks, too. I read, recently, about a 44 year old homeless man named Stevie Koech who was found frozen to death less than two miles from where we live. It was a night when it was 1 degree above zero. In a news article, one of the caseworkers at a shelter where he would stay on occasion said *"He would never stay for long; he would rather be outside. I don't think he liked to follow rules. He preferred his freedom, but he was a very sweet man. He was always smiling, always offering to help out and always reading a book. He loved to read," she said. "He always had a book in his hand."* It's a touchy situation. No one can be forced to stay inside... but one has to look at the larger scale problems.

Some years back in Massachusetts, Bill Weld, one of the fiscal nazis who served as governor of Masschusetts before he got bored with it, did everything he could to slash social programs and/or privatize them. He was actually taking a page from a vile right-wing Massachusetts think tank, the Pioneer Institute. Another such organization is the Beacon Hill Institute, whose executive director is named David Tuecrk (rhymes with JERK). According to a 1996 *Boston* Globe article, Tuerck said *"that private shelters are "a superior way of getting help to the poor"* and *He and other analysts advise giving tax credits to those who contribute to shelters, envisioning cities – much like those before the New Deal – where religious groups and charities cater to the poor. "There's every reason to believe that the poor, on balance, would be better off," Tuerck said.* Sound familiar? Every hear of Bush's called for "faith based initiatives"? Palming off what should be the responsibility of the government on religious organizations.

About the Pioneer Institute, the PublicEye.org website says the policies that they and other right-wing think tanks advocate, *"illustrates that those most harmed by privatization schemes are those who are economically and socially disadvantaged. Under privatization programs, the private sector is not obligated to serve all sections of society, further aggravating the growing gap in services between the rich and the poor."* But it also goes on to say, *"despite Pioneer's promotion of privatization schemes, viable and successful privatization initiatives in Massachusetts have been rare."*

With all the cutbacks, more people found themselves homeless and in need of services. It's just another example of how fiscal austerity often hurts the most vulnerable. It's the same blueprint that Weld's successors, Paul Cellucci, Jane Swift and Mitt Romney followed. Bush, as always, is doing the same with his new budget that increases the military budget and provides tax breaks for the most wealthy, at the expense of much-needed social services and that includes programs that assist veterans. You know—the ones who we're supposed to be "supporting," at least until they get back to the States. That's if it's not in a box or body-bag.

Before he left office, Romney froze the budget and instituted "emergency" cutbacks. These included state employees' insurance, retroactive pay from the public education payroll account and deep cuts in human services programs, including a pay increase for direct care workers. After an outcry, Romney reversed some of the cuts but not all of them. Now that Massachusetts FINALLY has a Democratic governor, it's hopeful that the cuts will be reversed. The new governor, Deval Patrick, has vowed to do just that. We shall see.

That wasn't the original genesis of this column though. Here's what was... a few weeks ago, I noticed a "for sale" sign on one of my neighbor's houses. I really like this guy. He'll talk your ear off, he's always got a fascinating story to tell and I always wondered if he was full of it or not. My guess at this point is he's not but the talking your ear off part is true. But he's the kind of guy who will help out in a pinch. When our house had that flooding issue, he loaned me a wet/dry vac and gave advice on what I should do. I borrowed his lawnmower all last summer 'cause mine wasn't working and I never did get around to fixing it. The year before, he'd actually tuned it up for me, replacing the sparkplug—that definitely saved me some money. He's brought us fresh veggies from his garden. So has another one of our neighbors. He even helped me break into my own house when I got locked out. As much as Peabody is a cultural backwater, where the main attraction is the mall (OK, there's the Brooksby Farm where you can go apple picking in the fall), I like our neighborhood because it's kind of a throwback to where I lived growing up.

This guy has been looking for a job since 2001. His background is in the auto insurance field and he'd worked for a long time as an "expert witness" on insurance lawsuits, basically going up against the insurance companies, never an easy task. I think that's what it was. I didn't want to have to keep explaining it over and over. In any case, he got completely burnt out. He'd been working insane number of hours. He got ill from the strain and had to be hospitalized. Since then, he's been looking for work elsewhere, anything basically, and hasn't been able to find a job. He's 58 years old and, obviously, that can serve as an impediment to finding any sort of substantial employment. He told me he'd wanted to do some roofing but didn't feel as though he was physically able to do so anymore.

He lives with his sister, who does daycare work—I got to play street hockey with two of her "charges" last summer and the five year old had one nasty slap shot! She's a huge Bruins and Red Sox fan and had a particular affection for Johnny Damon. I remember he had me save her an ad that Damon had taken out in the *Boston Globe*, thanking the Boston fans, after he'd defected to the dreaded Yankees. I joked that I was going to write traitor all over it before I gave it to her but restrained the urge to do so.

Until recently, he also lived with his brother, who he'd refer to as a "prick." In the mid-70s, this guy got into a drunk driving accident while on a motorcycle and ended up in a coma and has been living on a disability ever since. He'd spend most of that money on booze and gambling and would only kick in $100 a month. I only spoke to the brother one time and he basically barked at me. He wore a hideous Miami Dolphins jackets. This is PATS country, motherfucker!

So it was the three of them living there. They've lived there since 1966, when the houses in our neighborhood were built. He never married and I don't think his sister ever did, either. He told me he had a long-term girlfriend but it ultimately didn't work out. I'm not sure when his father passed away but his mother died three years ago. Before that, when she became ill, she required a lot of care. They had to take out a second mortgage to help pay for that care. I didn't know about that until this week. Since he hasn't worked in over five years, money had become tight. He told me a few months ago that, if things didn't improve, he'd have to sell the house and move. When I saw the "for sale" sign, he told me that they had been unable to pay the second mortgage and they were being foreclosed on. If the house wasn't sold by a certain date, it would be auctioned off and they'd end up with nothing, basically.

Fortunately, they did manage to sell the house—well, it's a pending sale. There's a purchase and sale agreement. Incidentally, his realtor is a guy named Ted Richard and Ted played in a pop/punk band called the Upstarts in the late 70s/early 80s. I saw them one time at the Rat in Boston and they weren't very good. I remember their guitar player Dave made goofy faces. He'd flip his head back and forth and alternate between grinning and frowning. I remember his last name was Keon, same as the hockey player who spent most of his career with the Toronto Maple Leafs and then jumped to the World Hockey Association and played for the New England Whalers!

OK, there's the obligatory "aside" for this column. That will be the only one—promise. Back to my neighbor's situation—he told me that they'll be moving out by the end of the month. I'm going to miss him and his sister. As I said, he's the kind of neighbor that's becoming increasingly rare these days. I can only imagine the stress they're going through, basically losing their home or, perhaps more accurately, having to leave under less than desirable circumstances. They've started the process of looking for a new home—a house, condo or apartment and

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they're even looking outside the city where they've lived their entire lives.

It's certainly not the same as the homelessness issue I wrote about earlier. But it shows how easily people can fall through the cracks, how they can lose everything. You keep hearing how well the economy is doing from the mainstream media outlets. Well, it's doing well for *some* people, particularly if you're the CEO of Exxon, who just had record profits—and the monotone voiced, hardline conservative pundit Ben Stein was lauding how their huge profits were good for the country... that was on Fox News and it was on in front of me while I was working out at the Lynn YMCA. I didn't hear him say that; I just saw the legend across the bottom of the screen and I had the punk rock on my MP3 player turned up loud so I didn't have to hear those windbags.

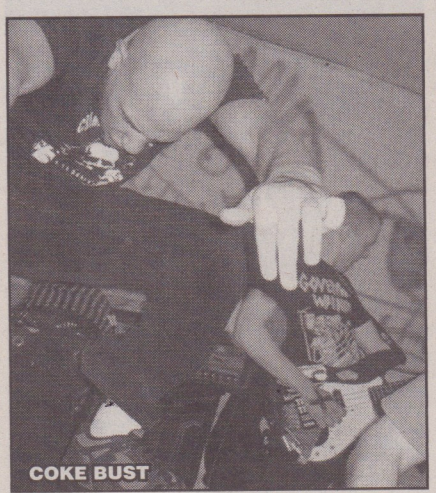
As I said at the beginning, it does remind me that I take certain things for granted. Compared to what my neighbors are dealing with, frozen or broken pipes or a busted lawnmower or a broken computer certainly pale in comparison and make me realize how privileged our lives are.

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS

In last issue's Pedestrians review, I said the band had broken up. That's not true and they'll be doing a European tour this spring. Sorry for the misinformation.

MUSIC REVIEWS:

COKE BUST-Demo 7" (Headcount, 7" EP) From DC, with a couple of guys who used to be in Bail Out. Flying the edge flag, going so far to claim that "when I die, there will be an X on my casket." Giving new meaning to "true 'til death," I imagine. Aggressive, fast, in-your-face hardcore punk with the occasional burst of double speed (there's the usual reservations about that) and some tough breakdowns. Even a metal lead for "No Middle Ground." There's definitely an early Revelation Records vibe here and the anger comes through. (www.headcountrecords.com)


COKE BUST

COMPLETE WASTE-s/t (demo) Five song cassette demo (also available on CD-R) from this Minneapolis hardcore band. Another band who fit the loud/fast thrash mode and screaming out the standard themes of alienation. They sometimes double up on the speed and it may not be a good idea for the guitarist to try a solo, as on "Why Do I Bother." Not bad and it's got good production, as well. (Cavan Reilly, 14 Oak Grove St., #306, Minneapolis, MN 55403, brian@tchardcorejournal.com)

DEADFALL-Mass Destruction (Six Weeks, CD) Collecting all the 7"s, comp tracks and a rough-sounding demo track. Bay Area thrash—raw and unadorned, angry, etc. Early DRI is a clear influence —short, fast songs and it might be a tad more effective if they eased up on the ultra-fast speed from time to time. The occasional curve-ball, such as the surf-flavored "What A Bogus." You get your bile's worth, here and don't expect a lot of melody, just fury. (225 Lincoln Ave., Cotati, CA 94931, www.sixweeksrecords.com)

FUK/CHAOS UK-split (HG Fact, split CD single) Two songs apiece from Fuk and Chaos UK and sharing ¾ of the lineups. An intertangled history, too confusing to detail but Mower and Gabba are both longtime Chaos UK people. Moving on to the music (that's the point, right?) Fuk have a fast, ferocious sound—I know how to turn a phrase, eh? The Chaos UK's songs are a medley, essentially, starting with a sample saying "you are free to do as we tell you," a moment of Japanese music and then careeening into a sound closer to speed metal on "All or Nothing," although "Hearts Of Noize" has some of the early 80s spirit. Blazing fodder from both bands. (http://www.interq.or.jp/japan/hgfact)

JILTED/BEYOND DESCRIPTION-split (Forest, CD) & VARIOUS-The Path To True Independence (Forest, CD) A two-way split and a four way split. First, Italian band Jilted tear through their three songs with flail and scream and adequate ferocity. Beyond Description hammer away with a veteran band's skill—aggressive, rampaging hardcore. They show up again on the four way split, along with Asbestos, Totsugeki Sensya and Destruction. The best band here is Totsugeki Sensya—a raw distorted attack that eschews the metal. Beyond Description introduce more of a metallic side on these songs. They have better releases and there's the bass-pedal distraction but the songs aren't bad. The tracks on the split with Jilted are better, though. Asbestos follow with an excessive, overwrought song, both in length and vocally. Once again, they have better material elsewhere. Finally, Destruction's fast 'n heavy opus is pretty good and it's a shame they're limited to one song here. (c/o Hideyuki Okahara, Ceramica 2 #301, 2-1-37 Minami, Kokubunji, Tokyo, JAPAN, okahara@pop02.odn.ne.jp)

LES HATEPINKS-Tête Malade/Sick In The Head (TKO, CD-EP) *Tres malade, tres bon. Vous écouterez ceci ou vous êtes stupide.* I think you can probably figure out what I just typed. If not, all you need to know is this is a fuckin' cool EP. Les Hatepinks put '77 punk snot and post-punk into a scintillating mélange, uh, mix. Jabbing songs with a hit 'n run quality and an edgy quirkiness. "Sweep The Shit" adds a little *roche de garage* to wind things up. Les Hatepinks had two previous albums and 2005's "Plastic Bag Ambitions" (also on TKO) is worthy of your time, as well. (8941 Atlanta Ave., #505, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.tkorecords.com)

MEHKAGO N.T.-s/t (S.O.Y., CD) Blazing lower-tuned Swedish-style hardcore-meets-metal (at least to my ears), recorded in a no doubt hot/humid summer environment in Florida. So it's natural they'd sound mighty agitated. The growly/distorted vocals make me thing of Gordo from Ratos De Porao. Five fast-paced, punishing songs with brutalizing breakdowns. (http://www.mehkagont.com)

MIDNIGHT RESURRECTOR-Life and Definition (HG Fact, CD) M-E-T-A-L! The real stuff, man. Well, thrash/power metal and Midnight Resurrector haven't completely left hardcore behind. "Revert To The Brains" is a sub-minute blast. Kid brays out the vocals in a hoarse cadence—some of the enunciation reminds me of Tom G. Warrior. The axeman, Daisuke Yamaguchi wields an impressive Flying-V. There's even an acoustic interlude that avoids pretentiousness (not an easy feat). The English lyrics do seem clumsy and it may have made more sense to sing in their native language but, in all honesty, it's more a way they read than sound. At least he encourages knowledge, chiding people with "Intellect-Phobia." Maybe they're inventing their own language. Midnight Resurrector aren't writing a new musical language but it's a scorching one, nonetheless. (http://www.interq.or.jp/japan/hgfact)

MISS 45-s/t (No Talent, CD) 000-WE-000-000... You hear that a lot on this five songer by Miss 45. Trash punk/rock 'n roll outta Sweden. The guitar licks are occasionally Thundersy but they aren't that campy looking. The drummer has a beard, for fuck's sake. In any case, "High Heeled Bitches" may be a tad puerile in the lyric department but it's catchy. So is the creatively-titled, rockin' "(Everything's More Fun) When You're High." "Don't Wanna Be Like That" takes a quieter turn and, at nearly 5 minutes, isn't nearly as scintillating. Good, if nothing to make you lose your marbles. (www.notalentrec.com)

NIGHTSTICK JUSTICE-s/t (CD-R) Pure negativity, anger, outrage—and the music matches the attitude. Four songs of full-tilt thrash without a break. The guitar lines have plenty of sizzle-wizzle without being excessive. I mean, there are only so many ways to describe straight-ahead hardcore punk but I'll say that this demo begs for a vinyl release. (www.myspace.com/nightstickjusticeba)

OUT WITH A BANG-I'm Against It EP (Fashionable Idiots, 7" EP)

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Whoaah. I may tend to overuse the term scorching but it fits here. Out With A Bang, from Italy and featuring the snotty vocals of former Grabbies' mouth Alessandro, play with a devil-may-care ferocity. A middle finger proudly raised as they bash through these short, adrenlain charged blasts, with no breaks between the songs, except when you pause to flip the record over. Garage, hardcore and punk on a collision course, even getting a tad weirder for "Hurt Yourself." A little better produced than the Grabbies but still rough. A US pressing of their limited-run 12" and with one extra song. Punk *fucking* rock. (PO Box 580131, Minneapolis, MN 55458, www.fashionableidiots.com)

PULLING TEETH-Vicious Skin (A389, 10"/ Chainsaw Safety, CD) Vocalist Mike Riley logged time as the vocalist of the Spark and this band is decidedly more metal sounding, while hanging on to some of the hardcore influence. But there's a Slayer-like charge to "Prepare For The Worst," especially the opening segment which takes a few notes from "Piece By Piece." That's not the only Slayer-esque moment, either. Plenty of adrenalin and the metal is convincing, instead of some lunkheaded chug chug approximation. The 10" comes with a huge fold-out poster that replicates the cover art. (A389: PO Box 12058, Baltimore, MD 21281, www.a389records.com/Chainsaw Safety: PO Box 260318, Bellerose, NY 11426, www.chainsawsafetyrecords.com)

RAW RADAR WAR-s/t (self-released, CD) If there's an intersection of ultra-heavy, thick metallized riffage and hardcore thrash, Raw Radar War have found it. If anything, these guys make me think of the Melvins in terms of the crush factor. The vocalist is Jonah Jenkins, formerly of Only Living Witness, Miltown and Milligram and he unleashes the anger in a ripthroat style hadn't used before. There's a brevity to the compositions until the band get to punishing epic "Truckloads Of Ammunition." A sound to open the terrain and swallow you whole. RRW are a loud, chaotic dynamo live and this disc gives you a pretty good indication of that. (http://rawradarwar.com)


RAW RADAR WAR



SPLITTING HEADACHE

SHORT FUSE-s/t (Assault/Underestimated, LP) This album's been out for awhile but I just got a copy and it's been on the 'ol turntable quite a bit since then. Short Fuse are from Germany but have a decidedly US hardcore approach. The sharp, back-to-basics sound with a clean, slashing guitar tone and agitated vocals. And while the sound is familiar, sometimes a chaotic element is added to a guitar or bass riff. "Confused," for instance, has a bumblebee bass line that instantly brings Void's "Explode" to mind. I'm going to stop overanalyzing now. Confrontational music, confrontational lyrics—for one thing, they're not fans of Turbojugend (Turbonegro)...and they don't hold back. (1349 N. Bell, Chicago, IL 60622, underestimatedrecords@gmail.com)

SPLITTING HEADACHE-Night Terrors (Collapse, LP) To recap, Splitting Headache include people from Tear It Up, Forward To Death, Dead Nation and Full Speed Ahead. I think that covers it. All that matters is what's on the turntable anyway, right? And this album has been on there quite a bit since I acquired it. As you'd probably imagine, it's a loud, aggressive hardcore punk sound. Not blindingly fast, either, although they do stick to a quick pace and there are some hot guitar licks. It's a common, perhaps simplistic thing to point out but when there's a punk and rock 'n roll drive to this style, it works well. The lyrics convey alienation, uncertainty, fear and outrage, looking both inward and outward—for instance, the shattered lives of veterans that is the subject of "Another Headstone." Lest it get completely heavy, their cover of the Big Boys' "Narrow View" is an inspired choice and conclusion to this solid effort. (collapserecords@gmail.com)

TERMINAL YOUTH-s/t (To Live A Lie/DeRok/ Give Praise, LP) With their first album, Terminal Youth have taken it up a notch. Hammering thrash and grind/powerviolence moves that don't overwhelm things. Tight playing, easily able to navigate the tempo transitions and the addition of a second guitarist adds to the band's overpowering qualities, as well. Elements of early Dropdead, Crossed Out, while the songs that close each side of the LP have more of an anthemic, mid-paced style that bring 9 Shocks Terror to mind. Will Killingsworth's recording is full-sounding without being too slick. Terminal Youth have evolved into a raging band. (www.terminalyouth.tk)

TOTAL ABUSE-s/t (Drug Money, tape) A 7" is due from this Texas band pretty soon but, in the meantime, here's an 8 song cassette. The letter says it includes ex-members of the Snobs, who put out a couple of pretty cool 7"s in the early '00s (hard to believe I'm using that term now). Raw, basic hopped-up hardcore punk with aggro and adrenalin. Some early Boston HC, DRI and Poison Idea influences—nowhere near that level yet, of course, and, as usual, the double speed doesn't always work to their advantage. But they definitely get it right on some songs here. (3703 Werner Ave., Austin, TX 78722, www.geocities.com/drugmoneyrecs)

TOTAL CHAOS-17 Years Of Chaos (SOS, CD) This anthology disc actually covers 13 years of releases, going back to '94's "Pledge Of Defiance" up until the recent "Freedom Kills" plus a few new and unreleased songs. 100% pure punk, in case you didn't know—mainly in the UK82-inspired vein, although not strictly following that form. There's the occasional '77-styled song, as well, such as "Baby I Hate You." In fact, most of the songs in that vein come from 1996's "Anthems From The Alleyway," where they come across with a Rancid vibe and represented a jump from the spottier "Pledge Of Defiance." The lyrics get right to the point—painting the sentiments in broad strokes so you can't possibly misunderstand them. The liner notes are way too tiny for me to read but, glancing at them, it tells the band's story. The band's spirited punk style is on the guilty pleasure side and 28 songs at once a bit much but a spiky dose from time to time isn't such a bad thing. (PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92878, www.sosrecords.us)

VIOLENT ARREST-s/t (Deranged, LP) When I first played this record on my radio show, I said the members of Violent Arrest were grizzled UK veterans and that's an apt description. I could list some of the pedigrees here—Excrement Of War, Heresy, Ripcord—three quarters of the band, here—and a couple of 'em were in Dumbstruck a few years back. As you'd guess, these guys play it loud and fast but there's an inherent tunefulness—well, in a hardcore punk framework. Work with me here. They're not completely reliant on speed, either—"Cannon Fodder" pounds away at a more measured pace. "Leavin' With Fuck All," meantime, has more of a DisScandiThrash (© Quint, 2007) feel. I'm around the same age as these guys (maybe a little older) and it's always good to see that, for some, the urge to rage, the need to have an outlet to exorcise life's frustrations, irritations and disappointments doesn't end when you hit 25 or 30. People who scoff at those sentiments are invited to go fuck themselves. Good job by these chaps. (www.derangedrecords.com)

Al Quint, PO Box 2746, Lynn, MA 01903/email: suburbanvoice@earthlink.net/ Sonic Overload radio: http://sonicoverload.moocowrecords.com)

AL QUINT

March Entry:

It's a Friday afternoon in early March and the new Jay Reatard album is playing on my computer. I downloaded it—I don't really want to tell you from where but it was because I wanted to hear what it sounded like before deciding whether or not I wanted to purchase the "real thing." I'm leaning towards buying it. Incidentally, the capsule review is Jay sounds as though he's been listening to some Adverts of late, although that's not the only influence. Good wavish/nervy punk, if you want to pinpoint things.

But, yeah, the whole downloading thing. It's old news, I suppose. Napster, AudioGalaxy, WinMX, Limewire, Grokster–the list of peer to peer programs that were "legalized" or shut down (or on the verge of it) continues to grow. Every so often, I'll see an article in the paper or a trade publication about how the RIAA or some other entertainment business authority is making an effort to "crack down" on illegal file sharing or outright piracy. Just today, I saw an article in the *Boston Globe* by Hiawatha Bray with the title "Record firms crack down on campuses" and the story tells about how the Recording Industry Association of America is going after universities, putting pressure on them to stop students from engaging in illegal file-swapping through their networks. The RIAA actually wants the universities to identify the students so they can pursue legal action. At least one local university, UMass, is going to cooperate.

I know some of my writing colleagues are opposed to downloading—especially for indy/DIY releases. I seem to recall reading Jack Rabid's anti-downloading sentiments in an issue of *The Big Takeover* but I can't find it. And I know that another esteemed *AMP* columnist, Tripp from the Unseen has similar feelings regarding downloading. From their perspective, I suppose it's understandable.

As I said, though, I get those files to determine whether or not I want to get a "real" copy of it, usually on vinyl, since the MP3 files are fine for my MP3 player. A lot of folks who I swap files with are also record nerds/hounds and have the files as a convenience but crave the real thing, as well. Also, it's a great way to obtain files of out-of-print records, demos, etc. What's the harm in that?

Regarding some of those indy releases, you know what's irritating? When records are pressed in super-limited quantities and, unless you know the secret handshake (to quote the always quotable Aaron Ulcer, late of Straight To Hell, Paindriver and Ulcer) or find out about it the day it's released, it's likely you'll miss out. A perfect example is the Sex/Vid 7" that came out a few months ago. It came and went before I even knew about it and now all I have are MP3s to listen to. Better than nothing, I suppose. If it's going to be re-pressed, I apologize. At least I have the second 7", "Tania," in my possession. You'll have to wait until next month to read my review but I give it a thumbs up, although it's not quite as hot as the first EP. Ultra-fast hardcore, if you're curious.

Seriously, though, if there's demand for a record, why print such a small quantity or let it go out of print and end up on eBay a few weeks after it's been released? I know some people defend this by saying it forces people to search things out, not have it come to them in a passive manner. I call bullshit—it just creates collector elitism. I don't really care if it's a first or second pressing—just try to make the damn thing available. Otherwise, what's the point?

I love my MP3 player. It's a complement to my music collection, not a replacement. I need to have something tangible and my records and CDs aren't going anywhere. The player is for portability, for convenience, obviously. When I'm exercising, it'd be a pain in the ass to keep switching CDs or tapes.

My walks are when I do my best thinking—or perhaps think too much! Not too long ago, I was walking around the track at the YMCA and had Agnostic Front's "Victim In Pain" playing. For the record, I have an iRiver, NOT an iPod because their self-contained iTunes software can suck it. Getting back to "Victim In Pain," some 23 years later, it holds up pretty damn well. I'd deign to call it a classic, in fact. I mean, when that breakdown for "No Justice" comes on, I almost break into circle pit mode on the track.

But there seems a bit of a contradiction in the lyrics, on back to back songs. Nothing major, just one of those things that crossed my mind, around lap 21 of the 25 I was walking. Something I've actually thought about for quite awhile when listening to this album. On "Hiding Inside," Roger sings about keeping feelings bottled up inside, keeping the real person hidden behind a façade. A *"character in a hardcore handbook,"* as he calls it. And the last line states "we don't need anymore great American heroes but real people being themselves and not weirdos." Now, isn't hardcore and punk meant to be a place for the misfits, the freaks, the "weirdos"? That's what Dave from MDC said in the *"American Hardcore"* movie. Of course, I seem to recall a flyer of a NY skinhead grabbing a punk kid wearing an MDC shirt by the face. By the way, discussing the song itself for a moment, that is one great "Yeeeeeowwww" to kickstart the song. It almost sounds like a tribute to one of those older Warner Bros cartoons.

In any case, after "Hiding Inside," the next song is "Fascist Attitudes," which gives a wag of the finger (thanks, Stephen Colbert) for people who are intolerant of others' style choices. The lyrics go *"why should you go around bashing one another? If they look or think different, why let it bother. Everyone's got their own style, their own thoughts. Don't let it bother you, don't let it caught"* and also mentions *"remember we're minority and everyone of us counts."* Another plea for unity but if someone wants to be a "weirdo," shouldn't that be respected?

Ah yes... a classic case of nitpicking. One of those little things I think about more than I probably should. Idle thoughts to keep my mind off of my thighs getting stiff after all those laps. So if any of those NYHC folks (especially the ones with big muscles) take this the wrong way, please don't beat me up. In the end, I suppose it doesn't matter. Well, maybe it does—cliques, divisions, etc remain a fact of life. Scene unity is always a nice ideal, as expressed on "United and Strong," another track on "Victim In Pain." Unfortunately, idealism and reality often isn't the same thing. And what's a "scene" anyway? Truth be told, I get tired of labels. I have a friend who talks about someone being a crusty or a hardcore person or a peace punk. I can't keep up with all the sub-groups anymore. Nor do I really want to. I'm getting too old to worry about this stuff. I do love being a weirdo, though.

What a great album, though! No other subsequent AF release has come close to it. And, sure, it's handy to be able to listen to it on my MP3 player but I won't be selling my original gatefold copy of the LP anytime soon. Nor any of those other treasured gems on my LP shelves and in my 7" boxes. I still have an insatiable desire to hear new music, even with so much dross to wade through. There's also the thrill of discovering music you hadn't heard before, either from someone's recommendation or stumbling across it yourself. As an example, I'd never heard of the Belgian punk band the Kids until about 6 years ago. I was poking through box of records—some of them were bootlegs and that's another issue for another time—and came across a boot of their self-titled, out of print debut album. The guy standing next to me, who had a pretty good idea of what I was into, recommended that I pick it up and it turned out to be a very wise purchase. How the hell did I miss this band in the first place? That's what I'm talking about—the thrill of the discovery. And, even though I've since acquired those songs on MP3 and have them available on my player, that record isn't going anywhere.

Of course, there's a sad outcome to both the legal and illegal downloading and that's the death of the record store, particularly independent stores. The problem is younger people just getting into music (and some "old-timers," as well) will only get music in the digital format, either legally or illegally. They don't need the stores anymore. They're perfectly satisfied to own the music in a digital file instead of something tangible. They cherry pick particular songs and the idea of an "album" is becoming increasingly foreign although, in all honesty, not a lot of bands make a "perfect" album. There's almost always a "skipover" track or two. Or more.

A few months ago, I guest lectured at a class on punk rock—yes, such a thing exists and it's at Tufts University—and was talking about the importance of zines in punk history. I mentioned that, with a lot of content shifting to the internet, paper zines were becoming less relevant, in a way. I talked about a zine as something tangible and how it was sad that hard-copy artifacts were starting to disappear. I compared it to people only listening to digital music and eschewing vinyl and even CDs. I polled the class to see how many of the students listened exclusively to digital music and, while it

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wasn't a majority, some hands did go up. I did mention that I liked having the "hard copies" because, if the computer data was lost, there's a good chance there wouldn't be any backup.

Another irony of the shift to digital is MP3s are a compressed, sonically inferior format compared to CD's. I actually think some recordings sound better on vinyl than CD, but the CD was supposed to be the ultimate listening experience with pristine sound and all that and going to MP3 seems to be a compromise in sound quality. That doesn't make any sense to me.

I have a short story/observation before moving on to the review section. Someone I used to be friends with would always comment about my music collection when he'd visit. He'd look at my CD or vinyl racks and go, in an annoying cadence, "when do you have time to LISTEN to all that stuff?" Or when I'd go to a record store with him or tell him about such an excursion and he'd go "what else could you possibly need?" Thing is this guy is also something of a music freak and buys new CDs (no vinyl because he told me, some years back, he's "through" with vinyl—ugh!) but I guess he looks at it as something finite. I hope I never reach that point—there's always something out there to be discovered.

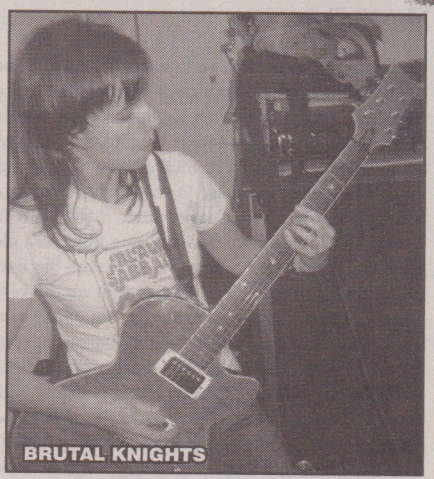
I HAVE ALL OF THESE ON RECORD OR CD!:

APPALACHIAN TERROR UNIT-Armageddon Won't Be Brought By The Gods (Profane Existence, 7" EP) Straight outta West Virginia—crusty hardcore punk. A spoken intro with somber accompaniment and then the pillage begins. Harsh female/male dual vocals and heavy, piledriving riffage and metallic squalls. The subject matter isn't exactly cheery, as you'd expect, summed up on the title track with the line *"humanity has been lost."* Following a standard musical/lyrical path but it's convincing. (PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneexistence.com)

BAYONETTES-We're Doomed (Deranged, 7" EP) Brash, tuneful punk without being sappy-sounding. Vocals that go from sweet to piercing and back again. Despite the upbeat-sounding music, there's some darkness in the title track and "Take This Pill," while the other two songs deal with affairs of the heart, also from a less-than-cheery outlook. There's a tough '77 era spirit, something that's quite in vogue of late, but bands such as the Bayonettes make it sound fresh all over again. (1166 Chaster Rd., Gibsons, BC, VON 1V4, CANADA, www.derangedrecords.com)

BEHIND ENEMY LINES-One Nation Under The Iron Fist Of God (Profane Existence, CD) There's really no missing the point of Behind Enemy Lines' crusade; there's not much subtlety. Behind Enemy Lines' third musical state of the world address includes commentary about US military aggression, the profound neglect of the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the attacks on so-called looters, overseas aggressive and the dangers of religious fundamentalism. Cries of pain, to quote Discharge. The same sonic missive—thick, heavy Scandinavian-inspired hardcore at a quick pace and the lead and backing vocals are angry and anguished. The disc comes with a bound booklet that includes lyrics and visual imagery. Once again, no missing the point. Unbridled intensity. (PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneexistence.com)

BELCHING PENGUIN-Demos 1985/1988 (Burrito, 7" EP) First off, one complaint. This record has way too much surface noise. Perhaps it's from the colored vinyl but, in any case, it detracts a bit. Belching Penguin were a Florida hardcore punk band—they released one album in 1986, "Draft Beer... Not Me." Side one features songs from their '85 demo, done as a three-piece and the flip consists of uncirculated demo songs from '88. Raw, energetic hardcore punk inspired by DRI and a tiny whiff of crossover. They also had a sense of humor and I imagine that the name of the band probably tips their hand. I imagine that's also made obvious by "Dead People Can't Drive" and "Senators' Wives." There's even a childhood trauma revisited on "Box Lunch." What was interesting is the fact that the guys stuck to the thrashin' approach in '88, after it had fallen out of favor. Comes with a xeroxed photo/flyer booklet and fold out poster—and that has a recent interview with their bass-player Jeff Jewhurst. A nice bit of archaeological musical digging here. (PO Box 3204, Brandon, FL 33509-3204, www.soundideadistribution.com)


BRUTAL KNIGHTS

BREATHING FIRE (Painkiller, 7" EP) This southeastern Mass. band just reconvened after a few years off and this is a pressing of their 2004 demo. Spasmatic thrash and heavier, oozing breakdowns that create a menacing ambiance. "Exile," for instance, slows to a snail's pace and just hangs there in the air. There's definitely a doomy metal influence in there (particularly for "Gates Of Ivory') to go along with the piledriving hardcore. You gotta be in the mood for this type of bludgeon effect. Like a killing spree mood. (8 Burney St., #1, Boston, MA 02120, www.painkillerrecords.com)


BREATHING FIRE

BRUTAL KNIGHTS-Feast Of Shame (Deranged, CD) The Toronto garage/punk miscreants are back for another go-round. The hand-written lyric sheet is tough to read (I REALLY need to invest in a magnifying glass) but the sarcasm-with-a-message-sorta comes through for "Government Asshole," "The Perfect Buffet" and "We Have A Website." Jay Reatard did the mixing and the result is a rougher and trebly sound this time around but the Knights haven't altered the formula that much. It remains loud, rambunctious and a lot of fun if not *quite* as good as the first album. (1166 Chaster Rd., Gibsons, BC, VON 1V4, CANADA, www.derangedrecords.com)

CAREER SUCIDE-Attempted Suicide (Deranged, CD) Career Suicide seldom disappoint and this album is no exception. What do you need to know? Snotty, ranting vocals and a high-powered hardcore punk sound that also rocks. Not in that contrived gas station jacket wearing, clichéd devil horn way. Not RAWK, in other words. It's mixed into the flail and the songs hang onto their catchiness, as well. Having drummer Brandon Ferrell (Direct Control, Government Warning, Municipal Waste) behind the kit makes a big difference, as well—dude can flat out PLAY and he keeps the songs moving like a motherfucker, even when they slow it down a tad for the title track. Bottom line—this is one of the best bands going today. After so many releases, one would think they'd be getting stale but Career Suicide sound positively inspired and inspiring here. (1166 Chaster Rd., Gibsons, BC, VON 1V4, CANADA, www.derangedrecords.com)

AL QUINT

CHELSEA-Faster, Cheaper & Better Looking (TKO, CD) The hook for the first new album for Chelsea since the 90s is that two 70s-era members, James Stevenson and Chris Bashford, are back. They actually came back when the band toured in '99. Chelsea were always something of a second-tier UK punk band. A handful of stellar songs but never really evolving into any sort of godhead status—"Urban Kids" remains the best song they ever did. In any case, "Faster, Cheaper & Better Looking" is listenable but inconsequential. The opening song "Living In The Urban DK" is emblematic—mid-tempo, tepid, just not all that ferocious or edgy, even with the basic guitar/bass/drums lineup. It'd be nice to have heard what they could have done with the tuneful riff on "45 RPM" if it they'd put a lot more voltage through it. Let's face it—with most of these old-guard bands, it'll be the original albums that will get played. Chelsea aren't an exception to that rule. (8941 Alabama Ave., Suite 505, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.tkorecords.com)

CIDER-They Are The Enemy (Painkiller, LP) Most of these songs originally came out on a 7" on Painkiller but the band weren't happy with the sound quality so here it is again on a 12", along with three decent demo recordings from '96 and a live song recorded in 2004. A much hotter mix this time. The Clevo nastiness—as mentioned in the review of "Battle of The Worst Bands" compilation, Cider and their compatriots had a chip on their shoulder, to use a cliché. A wanton, fuzzed-out sound with guitar and bass merged into a molten sheet of sound. A combination of breakneck hardcore and taking an oi-ish turn for the live "Thanks For Nothing.". A phony British accent ("we're British from Cleveland") that turn redneck (?!) by the end of the 7" tracks. Quality antisocial punk rock. (8 Burney St., #11, Boston, MA 02120, www.painkillerrecords.com)



SCAPEGOAT

SCAPEGOAT (Painkiller, 7" EP) Lumbering heaviness alternating with blast-thrash mania. A few Boston area bands are following this Crossed Out/Infest-inspired template and Scapegoat are one of them. Lyrical fragments screamed from the gut and a thick, cacophonous sound delivered intensely. This isn't catchy stuff—it's intense and the recording is full-sounding. Provocative fold-out poster sleeve, as well. (8 Burney St., #1, Boston, MA 02135, www.painkillerrecords.com)

KING AUTOMATIC-I Walk My Murderous Intentions Home (Voodoo Rhythm, CD) A one man band. As in the King plays all the instruments simulataneously, except for a guest sax player on two songs. Pretty amazing if you think about it. This is bash-it out garage primitivism, sometimes with R&B-ish and bluesy touches. King Automatic, who hails from France and whose real name is Jay, is a drummer by trade. He's played with Thundercrack and Billy Childish. Some of the songs here have a Childish vibe, in fact, with the simple, stripped-down approach. The reggae excursion for "Here Comes The Terror" is somewhat ill-advised but the songs are pretty much spot-on the rest of the time. Cool. (Jurastrasse 15, 3013 Bern, SWITZERLAND, www.voodoorhythm.com)

MIDNIGHT BOMBERS-Evil Streets (Wondertaker, CD) The Bombers' vocalist Jerry is a native MassHole (i.e. he's from my neck of the woods), formerly with Bastard Squad. He relocated to the Bay Area some years back and now fronts this band, originally known as Deadfalls (not to be confused with Deadfall). They've released a 7" and I've got a demo CD-R, as well. Solid punk rock with a brashness and straight-ahead energy. But there's some snakiness in the guitar playing and other twists—such as the PIL-like dubbiness that starts "Satan's Children." The more interesting songs have those little wrinkles and it's all played at a fast pace. The lyrics expose a tortured psyche—introspective and troubled and it's echoed by the darker shadings in the music. (PO Box 470153, SF, CA 94147-0153, www.wondertaker.com)

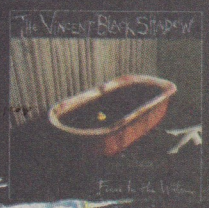
RABIES-Test Your Might (Sorry State, LP) Snotty west coast skate 'n destroy punk and picking up where the 7" left off. The production is bright without getting too flashy—it enhances Rabies' burning properties. Also, there's no way I would have known that "Plateau" was a Meat Puppets cover if I hadn't read the credits and Rabies' version is a high speed dismembering of the Puppets' laid back acoustic-flavored composition, at least until the end. The other cover is by Magnolia Thunderpussy, an 80s SST Records band and, while I remember the band's name, I don't remember the song. It's another changeup, an oddball ending to this searing album. To steal from Agression (another skate punk band) a bit, these guys have found an effective way to release intense energy. (www.deadmetaphor.com/sorrystate)

RETAINERS-Teenage Regrets (Fashionable Idiots, 7" EP) Love the packaging here—a cut manila folder with a hand screened cover. As for the EP, it's OK. Raw, distorted garage and surfy elements and nearly-inaudible vocals under the din. Side one, with "Teenage Regrets" and "Zombie Caliente," are the best tracks. PO Box 580131, Minneapolis, MN 55458, www.fashionableidiots.com)

VARIOUS-Planet Of Friends (Boycott The Fencewalker, CD) This is an international compilation put together by a gentleman from Russia named Vova, who plays in a few of the bands on this comp (Hoods Up 495, Frank Castle Gonna Break Your Neck and The Razor Bois). It's to benefit his friend Alem Assefa, a dark-skinned man of Ethiopian descent who was beaten into a coma by nazi scumbags in Moscow. Alem is disabled and the funds from this comp will go towards his medical treatment. The collection is haphazard and the sound quality is equally uneven. Gleaning the highlights: Learn's sweeping hardcore is well-executed. Common Enemy and the 4 Sivits' straight-ahead punk fare pretty well. Dean Dirg's brief garage punk blast is one of the best moments here. Black SS are raging, as always. Some other bands of note include ANS, Vitamin X and the Tangled Lines. Punk, hardcore, street punk, crust, even some hip hop from Hoods Up 495. Even if the lineup of bands here (27 of 'em) doesn't entice you, at least check out the webpage set up to help Alem—http://en.pomogi.org. (daddydamage@gmail.com)

WOUND UP-s/t (Painkiller, 7") Three songs of angry punk rock bile, done at a medium pace and quite rockin'. The first song is "How To Make Friends and Influence People" and, if anything, Wound Up don't sound as though they want to be anyone's friend, in light of the two other songs, "Fuck Fashion" and "You're All Wrong." It's a lame description, but Donald Jeffers' vocals are murderous sounding and, yes, they *do* sound wound up. Incidentally, one of the guitar players used to play with late 80s youth crew stalwarts Unit Pride but this is something a lot different. And better. (8 Burney St., #1, Boston, MA 02120, www.painkillerrecords.com)

Al Quint, PO Box 2746, Lynn, MA 01903/email: suburbanvoice@earthlink.net/



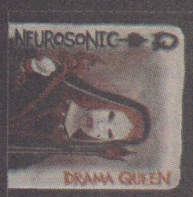
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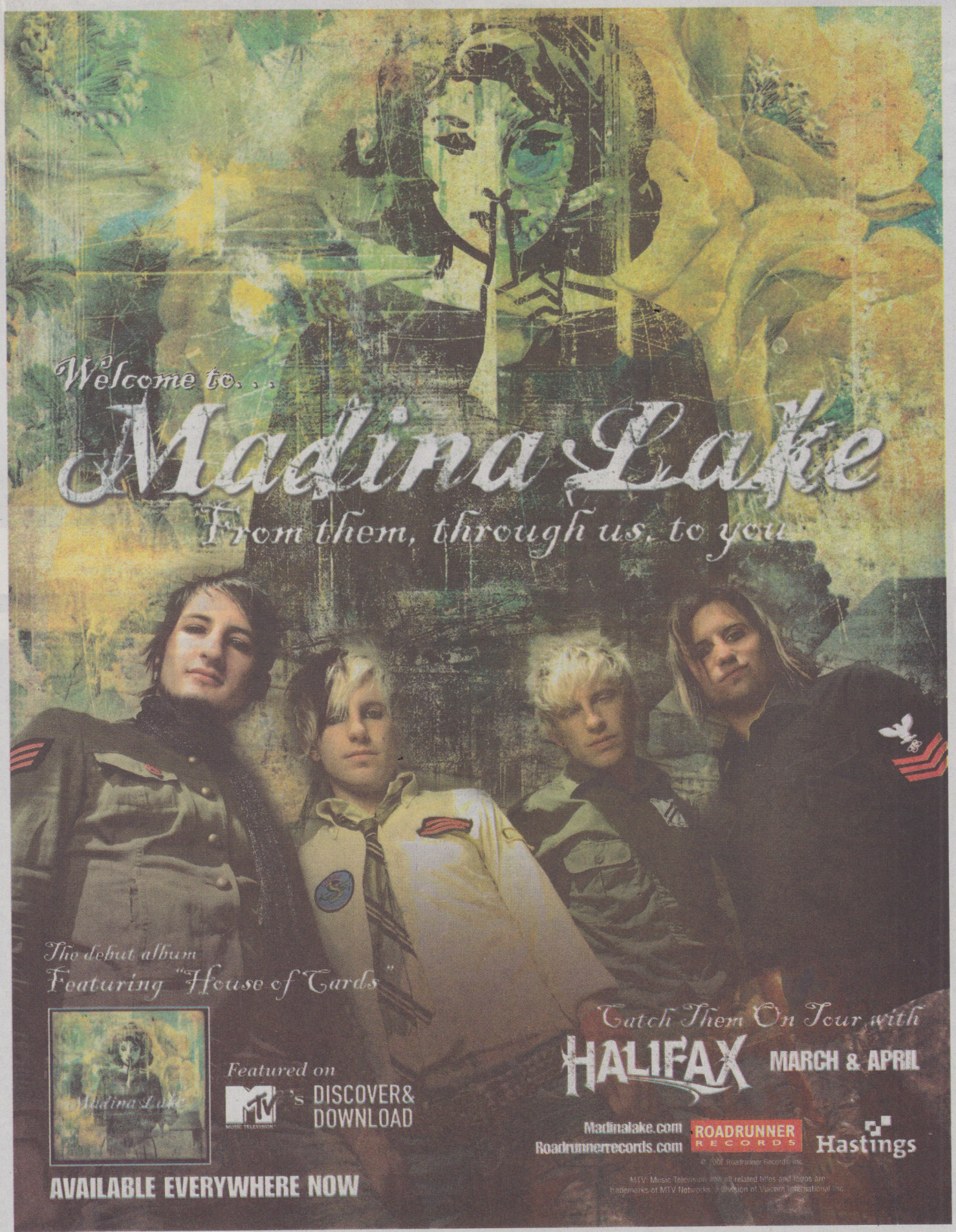
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HASTE THE DAY

INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN CHAULK

By Alex McAdams

On a sunny Thursday afternoon, I sat down to a telephone interview with Haste the Day guitarist and vocalist, Brennan Chaulk. With an impending album release, Chaulk was more than enthused to speak candidly on their new record, *Pressure the Hinges*.

Armed with tape recorder, pen, paper, and my cell phone, the scene on my end of the line was undoubtedly conventional. After asking Chaulk how he was doing, he chuckled as he announced, "I'm doing well – just getting tattooed right now."

I smirked as I thought to myself, "I'm sure as hell not in Kansas anymore."

After our courteous salutatory how-do-you-do's, the conversation quickly turned to Haste the Day's *Pressure the Hinges*, due for release on March 20, 2007. The title, which quickly caught my attention from the moment I read it, is a name that represents how the contents of the album come full circle. "We wanted to have a bit of a theme with the record for every kind of song. It all correlates [to the album]." As Stephen Keech, novel vocalist for Haste the Day, began writing for the record, the theme of constant pressures and struggles repeatedly presented themselves in the lyrics.

Before acutally listening to the record, the theme, which Chaulk describes as, "Act now. Live every day as your last," seems relatively cliché. The power of the lyrics, the vocals, and the instrumental layering, however, yields a sensation that is everything but commonplace.

After two months of writing and two months of actual producing – and with the influence of '80s rock bands and Nitro Records band, A Wilhelm Scream – Chaulk and Keech worked closely on the lyrical and musical content of the album.

"Stephen was really the main lyric writer on the record. He would come up with the ideas, and I would write with him on those. There was a lot more time spent on the lyrics. Certain songs like 'Stitches' talks about speaking up when somebody close to you is in trouble, and you have to rip the stitches out of your mouth and say something even though it's really hard."

"Stitches," which opens with the melodic line, "Five words is all it would take, five words to change your heart and mine," is the first single off *Hinges*. Those five words – "You're worth more than this," for inquiring minds out there – especially stand out in Chaulk's mind. "It's the song that really made *Pressure the Hinges* be the name of the CD."

In a world where the pressures of daily life and political upheaval of warring nations surround us, the need for a release is imminent. Undoubtedly, the scene has become more populated with groups who have strong religious beliefs that pertain to their lifestyles (yeah, I had to go there) – the Christian bands (you know, Norma Jean, Underoath, As I Lay Dying, etc.).

As opposed to a Christian band, Chaulk stresses, "We are Christians in a band. We all have faith. It really shines through I think, but not in a way where it would alienate anyone who wouldn't believe the same things as us. I think something we've always had in our lyrics – especially with this new record – is if you're a Christian you can read into it and know that we're Christians. That's not who our audience is generally, and it's not our target necessarily. We're picking songs that everybody deals with. We deal with the same troubles as everybody; the songs are for everybody. Everyone's struggles are the same whether you're Christian, atheist, or agnostic. You're still going to be able to relate to the record. We try to do it that way. There's a positive message in our stuff – more than necessarily just being Christian."

"There was a lot more passion involved," continued Chaulk. "There are songs where the verses are singing. Before we didn't really have any of that at all; it was just screaming straightforward. We wanted to bury that up, so you didn't feel like you were listening to the same song over and over. We've been wanting to do that for a long time, and we finally have the ability to, having Stephen being able to sing and scream. Stephen screams more, and you can understand every word that he's saying."

With the movement of Haste the Day's music into a more complex repertoire, Jimmy Ryan, Haste the Day's former vocalist, seemed to disappear completely in the new mix.

"I talk to him everyday," said Chaulk. "He really felt like he needed to focus on his marriage. He was ready to move on with his life. He works for Tooth and Nail and Solid State now, so he works directly with us every day. We're all very close still."

Life since the withdrawal of Ryan has been relatively low-key. Other than writing for *Hinges* and flying out to dates for the Silver Bullet Tour in the fall of 2006, Haste the Day has enjoyed taking the year off, which Chaulk describes as "great."

"We're about to head out on the road doing a co-headlining tour with From Autumn to Ashes."

The 63-day tour, which starts on March 6 and ends on May 9, is also sporting Maylene and the Sons of the Disaster on its bill. Haste the Day, Chaulk included, are excited to get back on the road again and meet the fans. "We want to go and pay thanks to the people who come out. I feel so blessed to be doing what I'm doing – I love it. When I don't do it, I feel like I've robbed myself of being able to have a great conversation with somebody. Really, we all just lucked out."

Before every performance, "we do our same goofy stuff. We're like little kids. We do pray before each show and that type of thing. We put our hands in the middle and do some sort of chant as off time as possible (for some reason we find that really funny). It usually sets the mood for us to go up there and not to take ourselves too seriously."

In all sincerity, Haste the Day have proven themselves to mature musically in comparison to their last works. From the first track, "Eye of the Needle" to its last, "Chorus of Angels," each song is delivered as a dynamic, in-your-face masterpiece.

"The most powerful song, at least to me, on the record is the final song called 'Chorus of Angels.' There's something about it. I remember when we were in the studio; I went in there and got chills up my arm. There's just something epic about that song. It's a great close to the record. Hopefully people will like this record enough to get to the final song."

As the interview came to a close, Chaulk encouraged fans to buy the special edition of *Pressure the Hinges* (equipped with a DVD documentary of sorts), which is also due for release on March 20. "We don't try to take ourselves too seriously, and I think it's a good representation of who we really are."

Although what we hear is most important in the music world, having personality doesn't suck too badly either. ↖

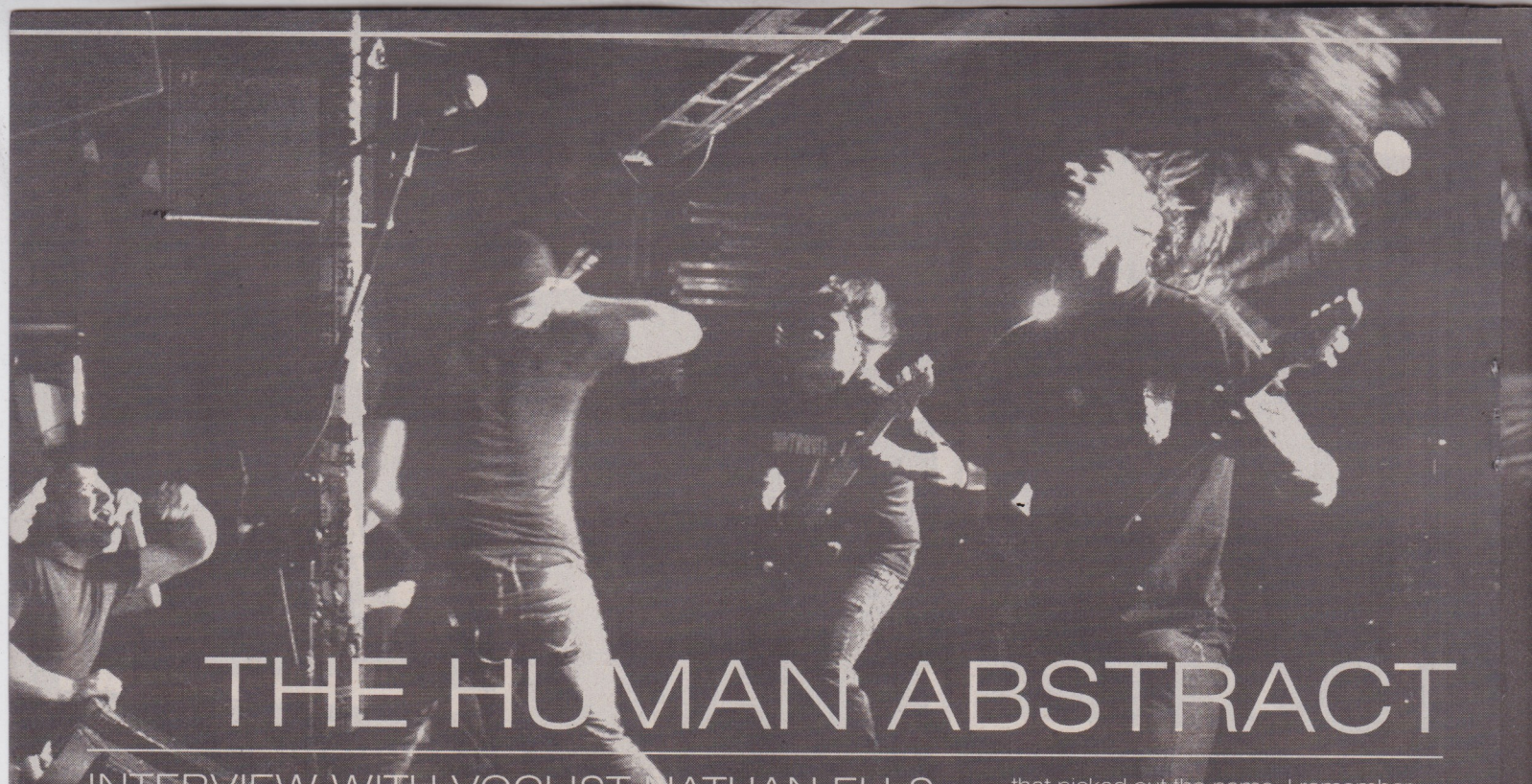



STREET DOGS



BOUNCING SOULS

PHOTOS BY BRETA BRANYON



THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

INTERVIEW WITH VOCLIST NATHAN ELLS

Interview & Photography By Jenn Dohner

I am pretty damn sure that 18th century poet William Blake had no idea that one of his poems would become the name of a cutting edge metal band. "The Human Abstract" is not just another band trying to make it. They are one of the bands that could potentially influence and alter the music scene completely. Instrumentally, they produce sounds and riffs I did not know were humanly possible. William Blake happens to be one of my favorite poets, so the band had my attention right from the get go. After hearing them play live I was hooked. I think if William Blake were alive today he'd be proud. I think he'd also be in a metal band.

When I met up with The Human Abstract in Seattle at El Corazon we spoke in a room that I can only describe as "grungy". Sounds a little stereotypical of Seattle, I know, but it really was. Red paint peeling off the walls, black floors, squeaky staircase, the blaring sound of another band in sound check. The only thing missing were flannel shirts. When I first reached the top of the stairs I saw Phil Labonte, lead singer of "All That Remains", blow drying a pair of jeans. He noticed my quizzical look and simply said, "Smelly jeans". That's hardcore metal right there!

I am usually behind the camera, so it felt a little odd being filmed while doing the interview. The band is taking video footage from the tour to document their journey. Who knows, maybe when they get insanely famous, you'll see me on their DVD looking all dorky like.

While I spoke with Nathan, the rest of the band sat in the same room, doing their own thing. Strumming guitars, typing on the laptop, and eating chips & salsa. I think some people have visions of the heavier rock/metal/punk bands destroying hotel rooms, drinking heavily and cashing in on the massive amounts of groupies. I have yet to see that. These guys were chillin' with a cooler full of "Naked" drinks. It's the new rock and roll.

Was "The Human Abstract" named after William Blake's poem? And if so, was it because you felt the band represented any particular elements of the poem?
That's an interesting question. The band was named before I joined and it was actually named after William Blake's poem. Brett, our drummer is the one that picked out the name. I remember when I joined the band and was told it was named after a poem, I thought hmmmmmm, named after a poem, and then I read the poem. I definitely do feel that it's an excellent name for what we do. The poem to me, is about the weight and complexity of the human spirit and the way that we view ourselves.

I have heard that people are trying to label your music and put it in a specific genre. One of the most interesting ones I heard was "contemporary metal". Do you consider this to be an accurate description?
(laughs) I've never even heard of that one, contemporary metal huh?

Yeah, I've also heard metal core, have you heard of that one?
It's very interesting, Dean and I were actually talking about this today. Online there's different forums with people arguing what genre we are. And it's like every different genre circle is almost derogatory. I personally don't really think about that. As far as a genre/title is concerned, that's about the furthest thing I think about daily, ya know? We do what we do.

It is what it is.
Exactly.

AJ & Dean formed the band in 2004, do you feel that the band has had an unusually quick success rate?
I can say from personal experience that I've been in metal bands for 10 years, and this is the quickest that it's come together for me. It was like BAM! I'll





also say this, this band has not stopped touring since it was put together.

So you've been bustin' your ass touring then?
Absolutely. We've been playing shows just about everyday and touring for a year non-stop. We don't really have time to see how successful we are. If we are climbing levels, it's because we're bustin' our asses doing it.

So how have things changed since releasing the album in August 2006?
After it was released, I have really enjoyed going to cities and seeing kids recognize the music and know the lyrics. That has gotten more intense the longer the album has been released. We played a show yesterday in Vancouver, and it was huge, I don't even know what the numbers were. Does anyone know what the numbers were?
Dean (guitar): About a billion right?
Yeah that's about right (laughing). There were so many people anticipating the show, and they all knew the words to the songs. It was just odd because I've never been to Vancouver. I went there as a stranger and left knowing people. People would say, "Oh there's Nathan, Hi Nathan!"...and I was thinking "Whoa, I don't know you". You get to know people at top speed. It's great.

Any problems crossing the border?
There's always problems crossing the border.

Did anyone get violated with those special "exams"?
(Laughs)... No orifice searching thank God. Most bands have problems with the border. Personally? I got this reckless driving charge a couple years ago back in California. Reckless driving is a criminal charge in Canada, even though it's not here.

No way, really?
Oh yeah, there's lots of things that are criminal charges there, but aren't here. But this was actually not too bad, they were probably the nicest they've ever been. The guy even told me how to get it switched over in the book so I won't have any more trouble with it.

What's it been like opening for All That Remains?
It's been amazing, all the shows have been huge, most of them sold out. They are great people and I've really enjoyed hangin' out with them, so yeah, it's been a great tour.

What are your plans after touring?
Another tour. Now that the record has started picking up, they've bumped our next 3 tours together. It's hard to think of life without touring now, you get so used to it. So when we get time off it's like oh man, what do I do now? It's weird.

Do you think you'll ever tour with Ozzfest?
It's hard to say, we'll do whatever's best for the band. There's so many huge tours, where lots of bands get together, there's Warped Tour, Taste Of Chaos, Sounds of The Underground. We'll weigh our options and do whatever's best at the time.

What's the craziest thing that's happened to you guys?
Depends on what your definition of crazy is, for what avenue I go down here.

Say whatever you want.
Dean: What about jumping the toll bridges in New York?
Oh yeah, that was pretty crazy! Back on our first tour, when we were a bit wilder and kind of childlike about everything and it was like the world has just opened up, we were going thru New Jersey and had a couple days off . We didn't know what to do, so we decided to leave the trailer in New Jersey and just go into New York. So we ended up walking down this road and crossing the New Jersey turnpike and jumping over the toll booths, like hurdling style. We got to the bus station, hopped on the bus and headed back to New York. We ran around all night and then crashed in Central Park the next day.

That would make a great video!
Yeah it would, it was epic, rampaging through New York city. It also really built the camaraderie between us and bonded us as a band, cuz we were still getting to know each other. Adventures at 4 in the morning, it was awesome.

So if I stole your mp3 player, what would be the most surprising thing I'd find in it? Like what would make me say, "Whoa, I never would have thought he listened to that."
Like the irony?

Yeah.
AJ (guitar): ...Raffi. (laughter)
We all listen to a lot of different things. Metal is definitely not the only thing we listen to. I'm big into electronic music and hip-hop, & all rock. If you're looking for irony, I would say A Tribe Called Quest and other old school hip hop.

When you said hip-hop all I could think of was Jay-Z ...
No no, definitely not...(laughs)...I'm not into radio rap.

Ok last question, does the band have any ritual or routine that you do before you go onstage?
We all take our time to ourselves individually.
Dean: ....You're watching it right now. Absolutely... this is what they do. I do some stretching and stuff.

Like pilates? Yoga?
(laughs)...not like yoga, just things like sit ups, push ups, stretch my neck, stuff to get me pumped up and prepared for the show.

Alright Nathan, thanks for your time and good luck with the album and on the rest of your tour!
Thank you!

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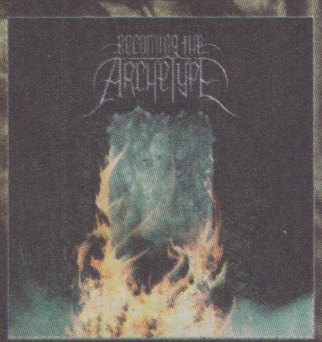
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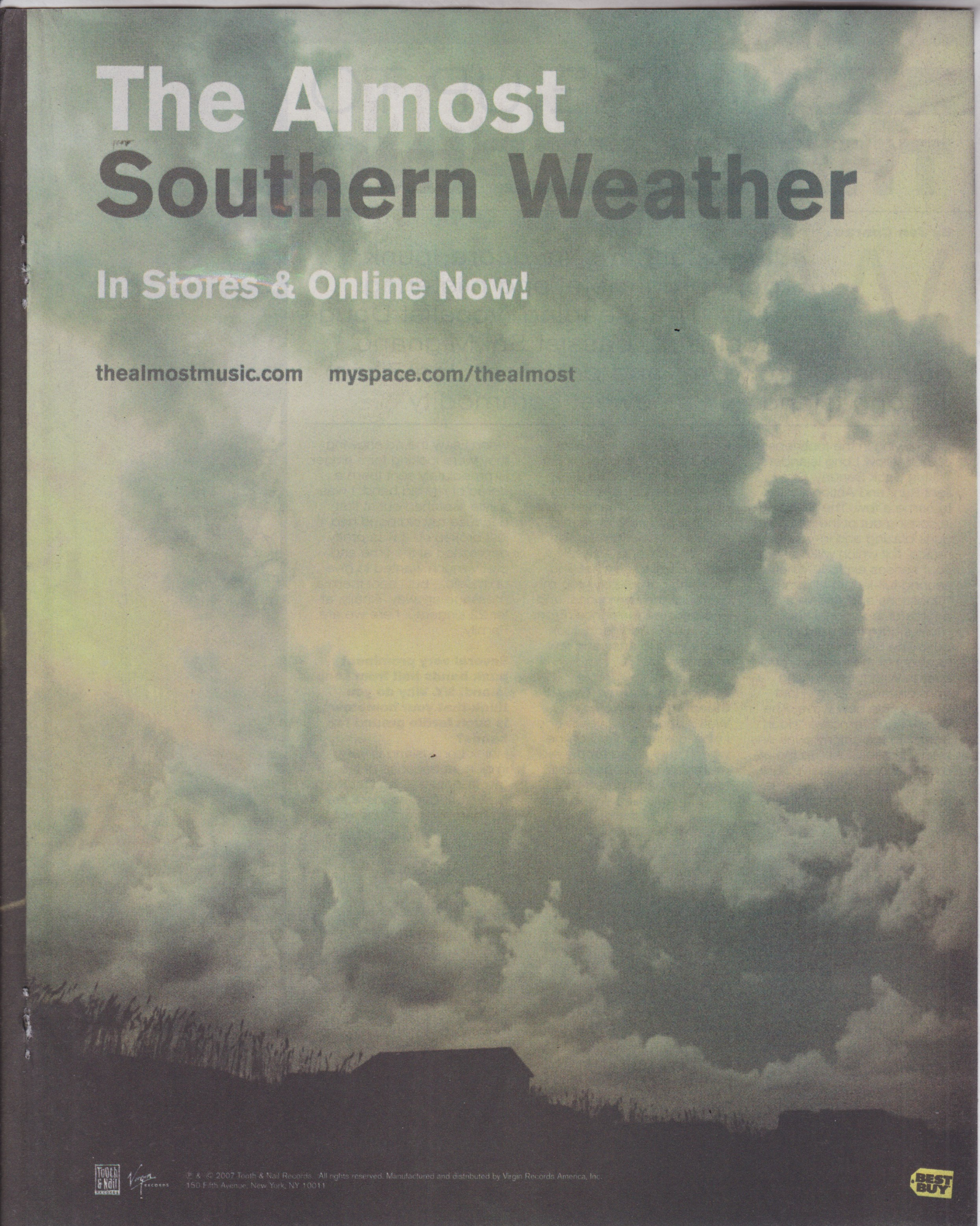
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WAKE UP TO THE SLEEPING

By Jen Conrad

With equal parts hardcore, punk, pop, prog metal and blistering rock, The Sleeping (vocalist Doug Robinson, bassist Sal Mignano, guitarist Cam Keym, and drummer Joe Zizzo) is Long Island, NY's newest commodity.

Following in the footsteps of their fellow Long Islanders, Taking Back Sunday, Straylight Run, and Action Action, to name a few, The Sleeping is coming out of the gate with guns blazing and in-your-face rock n' roll which will make your senses explode. Their second full-length album, "Questions and Answers" is a forceful, emotional sophomore album that will further push The Sleeping into the forefront of the national music scene. With tunes varying from blistering "Don't Hold Back" to the new wave, The Cure-esque, emotive "Heart Beatz" to the catchy punk anthem "Listen Close" to the atmospheric, progressive "Still," "Questions and Answers" is sure to touch a chord in fans of any genre of music. Having toured with the likes of Fall Out Boy, Matchbook Romance, and AFI, The Sleeping are seasoned veterans of the live performance! I just had the pleasure of seeing their live show with Senses Fail, Saosin, and Alexisonfire! I've got to say that The Sleeping completely won me over with their emotional and energetic performance. Front man, Doug Robinson, took some time to answer a few questions for us.

Please tell us how The Sleeping came to be?

Well... about 3 1/2 years ago I was looking around online when I saw an ad for the ex-members of a Long Island hardcore band called Skycamefalling. I was a fan of the band and when I saw the ad showing they were looking for a singer, I immediately sent them a demo of my old band. I was a little sketched out at first because my old band had just broken up. I was pretty depressed at the time and pretty much wanted to give up music... but I sent them a message anyway. Finally, after 22 singers... here we are. Family.

Several very prominent punk bands hail from Long Island, NY. Why do you think that your hometown is such fertile ground for bands?

I think Long Island is very important because of the mix in culture. It isn't far from New York City, so there are so many different types of



PHOTO: JOELLE ANDRES



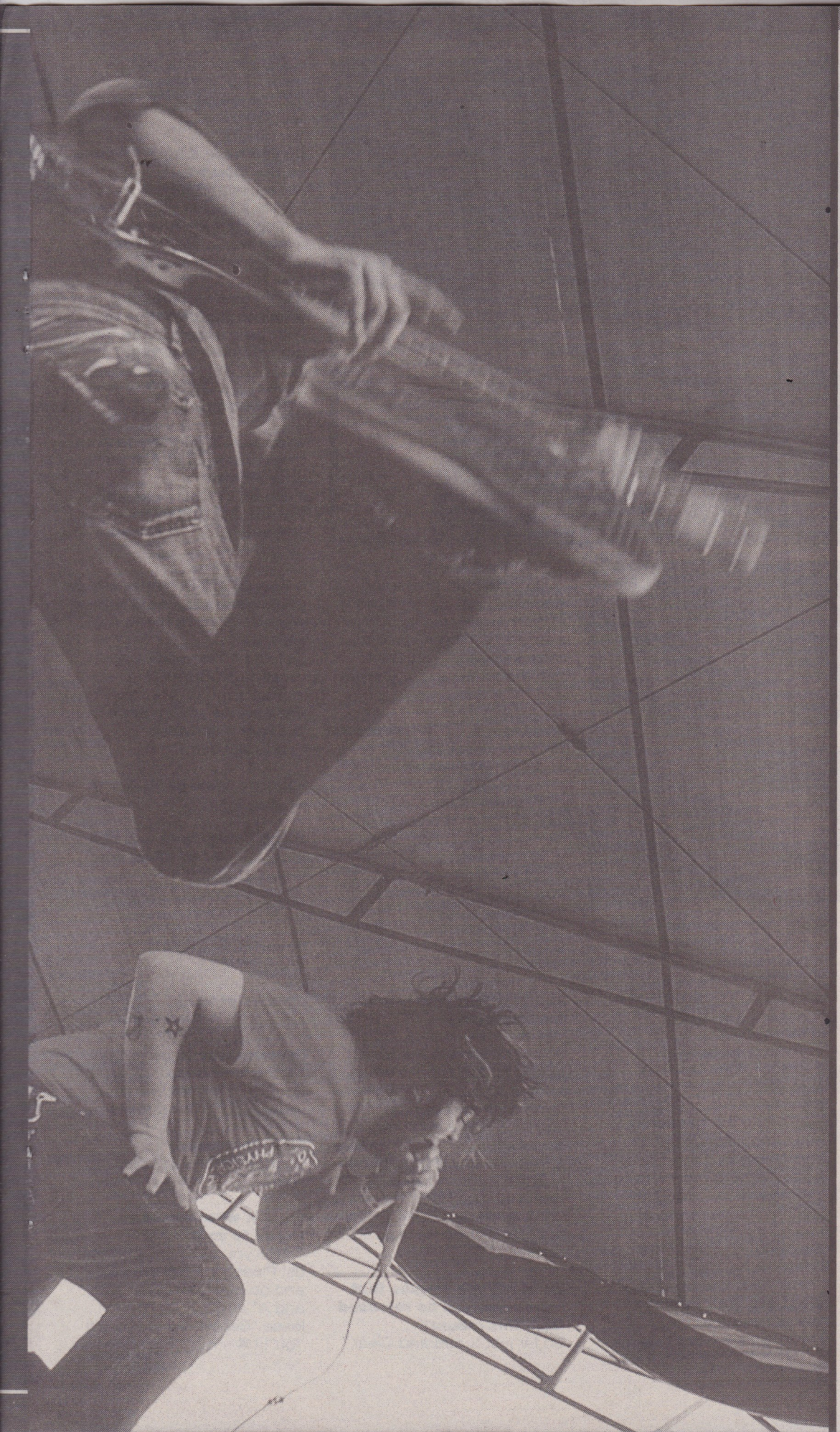


PHOTO: JOELLE ANDRES

people in this one area. Luckily, so many of these kids from different walks of life and influence are meeting friends and creating music, which gives off an amazing vibe to other people in this world. Not to mention, every Long Island band I know works their asses off and doesn't stop until people listen to what they have to say.

Your songs vary in style and hit on several genres of music...from punk to pop to hardcore...you can appeal to many types of fans. Is this by design or just how a song develops as you write it?

It is just by how we feel. We always write what we feel. We do not want to cater to any type of style. We write what we feel and we write what feels natural and honest. We are just happy to know that we can appeal to many different types of musical styles...especially because the band as a whole listens to all different types of music.

Sal and Cameron were previously in a band called SkyCameFalling. The Sleeping was their plan to move in a different direction... how does The Sleeping differ?

The Sleeping differs for obvious reasons, but it also differs because of its similarities. We love heavy music... we wouldn't want to abandon it, but we do enjoy doing it in a different fashion. We like to keep it as tasteful as possible... with whatever it is we do, not just the hardcore elements. It's nice to keep your roots, but its even better when you can challenge yourself instead of the typical "scream sing scream scream sing" approach a lot of bands formulate.

You toured with Fall Out Boy, Taking Back Sunday and Matchbook Romance back in 2004, how do you think this national exposure has helped your band?

It definitely helped us out a ton, I am very happy to have been a part of that amazing tour! It did a lot for us, but it also gave us room to come into our own after the tour itself. Tours come and go...it

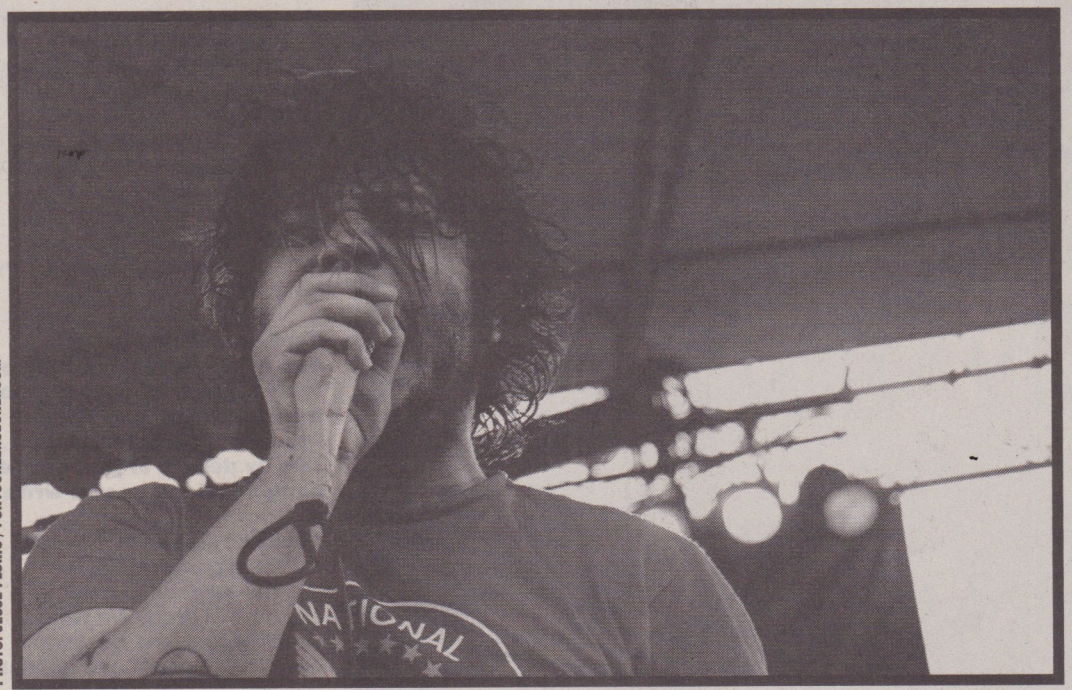


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takes a real strong group of individuals to keep going no matter what size tour you have been offered. Whether its the most highly anticipated tour of the century or the smallest tour you could ever come across in your life! It is the fact that you play 150 percent every night so that people who remember you don't remember you because of how cool of a tour you were on, but because you kicked the shit out of that tour for 45 minutes of the evening!

"Questions and Answers" is your second full-length release. It is your first on Victory Records. How do you think being signed to Victory has benefited you? How does "Q and A" differ from your previous album?
Victory is the hardest working label in the world... it believes in the grass roots of an operation. It doesn't matter if you are the biggest band in the world to them or if you are playing basements. If Victory signs you they sign you because they see the passion you hold. They can sense the hard work ethic and the drive to be something and the want to be something more than average. They see these feelings inside of you and they work just as hard on their end to make what needs to happen, happen.

What are your influences?
We all have a wide range... I am going to have to go with At the Drive-In as my main influence...that band has changed my life in more ways than any person will ever know. They remain my main influence because to me, their meaning will never die!

What is the writing process for you? What triggers a song for you subject-wise?
Well... we are hippies. We love to just sit around and jam together. We are a very mood-driven band. Subject-wise, most of "Q and A" was written about the passing of one of our dear friends and the loss (not death) of someone who I cared for terribly... so much of that fueled this record.

Tell us about your upcoming tour plans.
We are out in the UK right now with Senses Fail. Good bunch of dudes but Mike their bassist smells like the Prawn flavored chips here. He is sitting next to me and I might gag! Other than that we have a full US tour with our friends in From Autumn to Ashes and Haste the Day, then we come back to UK and EUROPE for the give-it-a-name festivals... SUPER EXCITED!!!

What are the singles that have been/will be released from this album?
So far just "Loud and Clear." We are hoping for one more...we just have to weed out one we can all agree on... (laughs)

Do you have a favorite song on the album?
I love "Heart Beatz." It means a lot to all of the band, there is a certain vibe and energy live when we play that song... unlike any of the other songs.

Have you been pleased with the performance of your new album since being released last year?
Yes...we would like to keep pushing as always, but yes we are completely happy.

What would you say to fans to get them to check out your album?
If you like honest music, and you want a release from everyday stress... check this record out!!!

A couple of questions about you...what's the best album you've heard in the last 3 months?
Deftones' "Saturday Night Wrist".... BOO YA!!!!

Best movie you've seen in the last 3 months?
Pan's Labyrinth.

Favorite band of all time?
At The Drive In

If you could meet one musician, dead or alive, who would it be?
Stevie Wonder or Shaquille O'neal (laughs)

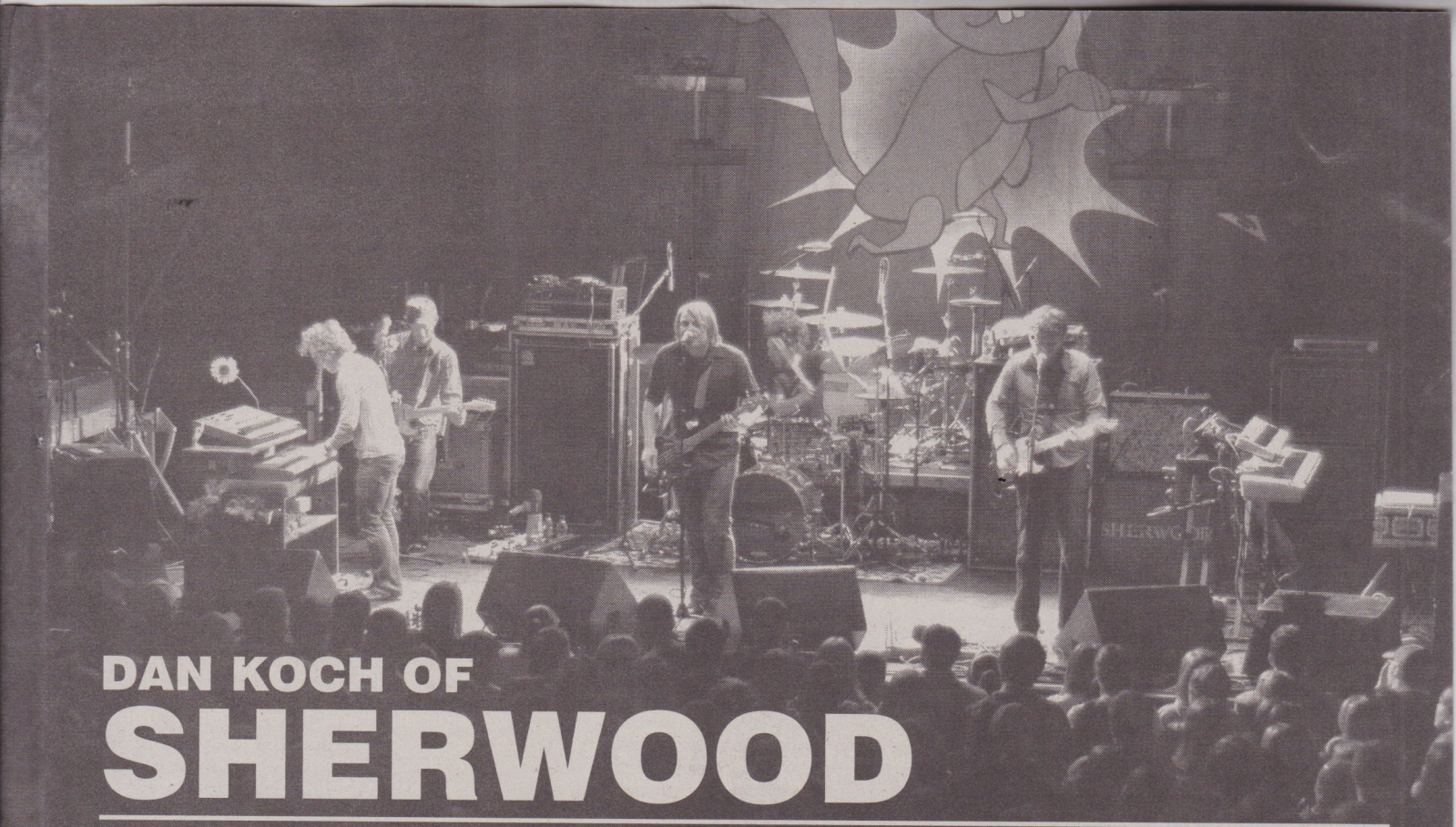
Favorite TV show?
"Heroes"

Chucks or Vans?
Depends on the weather.

Favorite way to pass time on the tour bus...
Porn, whiskey and writing. Wow I sound like a tool!

Favorite venue?
London Astoria or Roseland, NYC

Finally, what would you like to say to your fans?
Thank you all for supporting us! Please spread the love and go buy our record "Q and A" and buy our re-release "Believe What We Tell You"!!!



DAN KOCH OF SHERWOOD

By Dan Gonyea (www.future-breed.com)

California band Sherwood has released their debut record A Different Light and hit the roads with Relient K and Mae. Even with the amount of attention and pressure the band has been getting lately, the guys of Sherwood have not lost the fun, enthusiasm, and excitement about their music. If anything, it has been multiplied. From parodies of Full House to a music video with thousands of bouncy balls, Sherwood shows an exciting edge as a young and bright band. Guitarist Dan Koch took time out on the third night of their Relient K tour to reminisce on what's happened so far and what to expect from Sherwood.

This tour just started a couple days ago. How have the past two days been for you?
Dude, I feel like I'm in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. It's been absolutely crazy. For us, it's been so exciting. This is by far the most exposure we've ever been able to get on tour. I have absolutely no complaints. The guys have all been amazing. The crews for all the bands are amazingly nice. Both shows have been sold out. I think tonight is as well, if I'm not mistaken. That's a lot of kids. Nokia is like 2150 capacity. Electric Factory is like 2300 capacity. That's crazy! We just feel so lucky and fortunate. We're just trying to make the most of it.

After two months of shows like this every day, do you feel your band will be headed in a lot different direction than before?
I think that's what everyone is hoping. The hope is that if a high enough percentage of kids every night become Sherwood fans, then the next time we come around, our turnouts would be significantly improved. We've seemed to have really good responses so far. Yeah, not that we expect anything *drastic*, but it would nice to have a little more security in each city. Before, it was like.... Well, we do well on the west coast. For us, we get to the midwest and some east coast cities and it's like, we could lose money five nights in a row or something. That's a scary thought! Hopefully from the amount of exposure we get on this tour and album release, things will become a little more comfortable for us.

What do you think you'll miss the most being on the road for two months straight?
We're sort-of used to it. Through the years, the things that suffer the most are friendships back home. It's really hard to be a good friend to someone who lives at home when you're home so rarely. That's something that I struggle with all the time. I try to be in touch with friends back home when I'm there and then at least a little bit when I'm not. You don't want to lose those friendships. You can't lose those friendships. Those are the most important things. I actually have a girlfriend who lives in Seattle, but that's surprisingly not so bad. She's just really supportive so it's not really a problem. Where I've had the problems have been with my long-term friends feeling a little abandoned. I'm not very good at that.

Tomorrow's your big CD release.
Big day! We're going to be in Canada *laugh* Being in Canada the day our album comes out in the US. That's kinda funny.

Is it relieving to get the album out?
It's nerve-racking and exciting. It's a dual expectation. At one hand, you're really excited for the people who will



enjoy it because they can start loving it. You're also nervous for the people who aren't going to like it or the people who are going to perceive it as a failure or step backwards. You can say that you don't read reviews or something, but I do. I'm curious what people think. Also, there's the old proverb of, "The wise man accepts counsel." Some of the people I hear opinions from are people that I trust. It would be foolish not to pay attention to that just because "I know what I write" or something. It's not perfect! I'm very excited for it though, and I'm excited for our fans and friends to get it. What's cool about this record is Myspace was able to set a really early release date and meet all their deadlines. That's something that labels are notorious for not doing. I mean, it's out; it's in stores; it's ready to go! That's really cool. We're really excited about that.

How different is it being on Myspace Records compared to a different label that may not have the publicity Myspace does?

The funding for it is set up like an indie label. It's not like a lot more money is being spent compared to if we were on another mid-sized indie label like Tooth & Nail or Equal Vision. The budgets are very similar. This label has been the easiest for us to get a hold of and be involved in decision making. We have a really good feeling with what's happening when and what songs to showcase. We were able to discuss a lot of those options. We made a lot of decisions on how this album would be set up through that, which has been really cool. They have a staff and are a lot like regular record labels. There's just that added bonus of the vast amount of internet exposure they have at no extra cost. Maybe that's the future; that was our thought. We wanted to align ourselves with what was new.

Have you gotten to meet Tom?

Yes, we've actually hung out with Tom a few times! He's actually the one who found us. He's a big fan, and he found out that our old album contract expired. He contacted us and had already been interested in signing us. We've had a number of meetings with him. He sound checks with us at CMJ in New York. He's a really cool guy! Just a normal dude. When we've been with him, he's definitely taken more photos with people than we have *laugh* He's a really sought after personality. He's a really down to earth guy.

Last month you filmed a music video. How did that come out?

We actually filmed two. Our singer directed two music videos. It was a really fun experience! Especially the video for The Best In Me, which involved four-thousand bouncy balls. Playing while being pelted by bouncing balls was one of those rare moments where you get to be a kid as an adult. That was really fun. The other one is a little more of a concept, which came out great. I am really excited for people to see the video for Song In My Head. Our singer had a really good idea, fleshed it out and everything. We had some kids that Joe's family knows. A couple five-year-old actors. They were great. I think it was different from a high-production value video in that we really controlled a lot of it. There was some budget stress because we had so little money for it, but they both turned out great.

You also did a parody for Full House. Who got to decide who plays what part?

laugh That was probably some sort of group discussion. I just remember everyone agreeing that Mikey had to be Stephanie. Joe kind-of looks like Stamos. That was an easy pick as uncle Jessie for him. We actually rented a convertible for that video and went to thrift stores around San Francisco and matched the clothes for each scene to the real show. That was another one where we got to be like kids again. I guess I get to act like a kid a lot more than I realize!

Your street team has a pretty intense website. Is that in its beginning phases?
That is the new chapter in the Sherwood street team. We ran our own for a while which ended up being too much to handle. Myspace is helping with this new one. Our plans for it are pretty high and expansive. Hopefully that will become its own little entity and those people can have interaction with us. I'm not as savvy with that stuff; that's more of our singer's workings with the labels and stuff. He has a lot of ideas for it. Finally it feels like we can make those ideas happen. All I know is that it's a really cool idea, and I don't know how much I can say about it confidently yet.

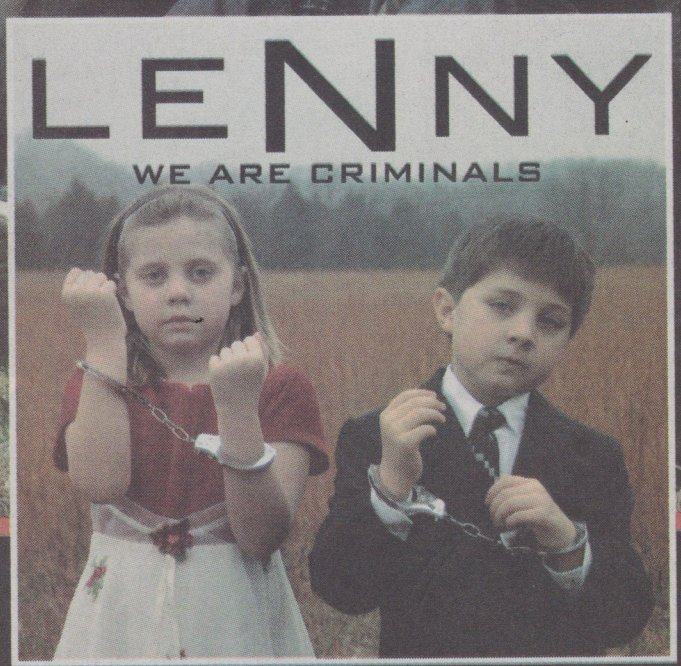
Who do you look up to the most in life?
In life? Well, my biggest role model is probably my dad. My parents in general. They are just amazing, amazing people. I don't want to say I have the perfect parents because that's probably not true, but I honestly feel that way. And so do a lot of my friends. It's hard to not feel like that. They are awesome, and that's who I look to for an example most of the time in a tough situation where I am looking for what to do. Usually that ends up being right. Or I'll just call them and ask them what they would do *laugh* And that always works. In terms of musically, my biggest hero is Brian Wilson. He's just my favorite, the way his mind worked and the kind of stuff he came up with. The combination of the two, I really have a deep respect for Bono. He's really able to pretty well separate and integrate his music life and public figure life. I think it's cool that you don't have to be a U2 fan to support the ONE campaign. I think he has a lot of guts. Most famous musicians choose to live a more private life. I am much more inspired by his decisions though.

Do you have any final words to the readers?
I would just like to encourage people to think beyond entertainment. Entertainment is valuable at times and it's obviously the industry I am in. There is a lot of art in it that is very valuable. There are also a lot of things in the world that are arguably much more important than that. What we try to do as a band is point people in that direction while still entertaining them and having fun with them. There are a number of incredibly worthy causes worth pointing out: Blood Water Mission, which dig wells in Africa, World Vision, one of the leading non-profits that does a ton of work and is very reputable, the ONE campaign, and just anything like that. There is a lot of good an individual person can do for the world. ↖



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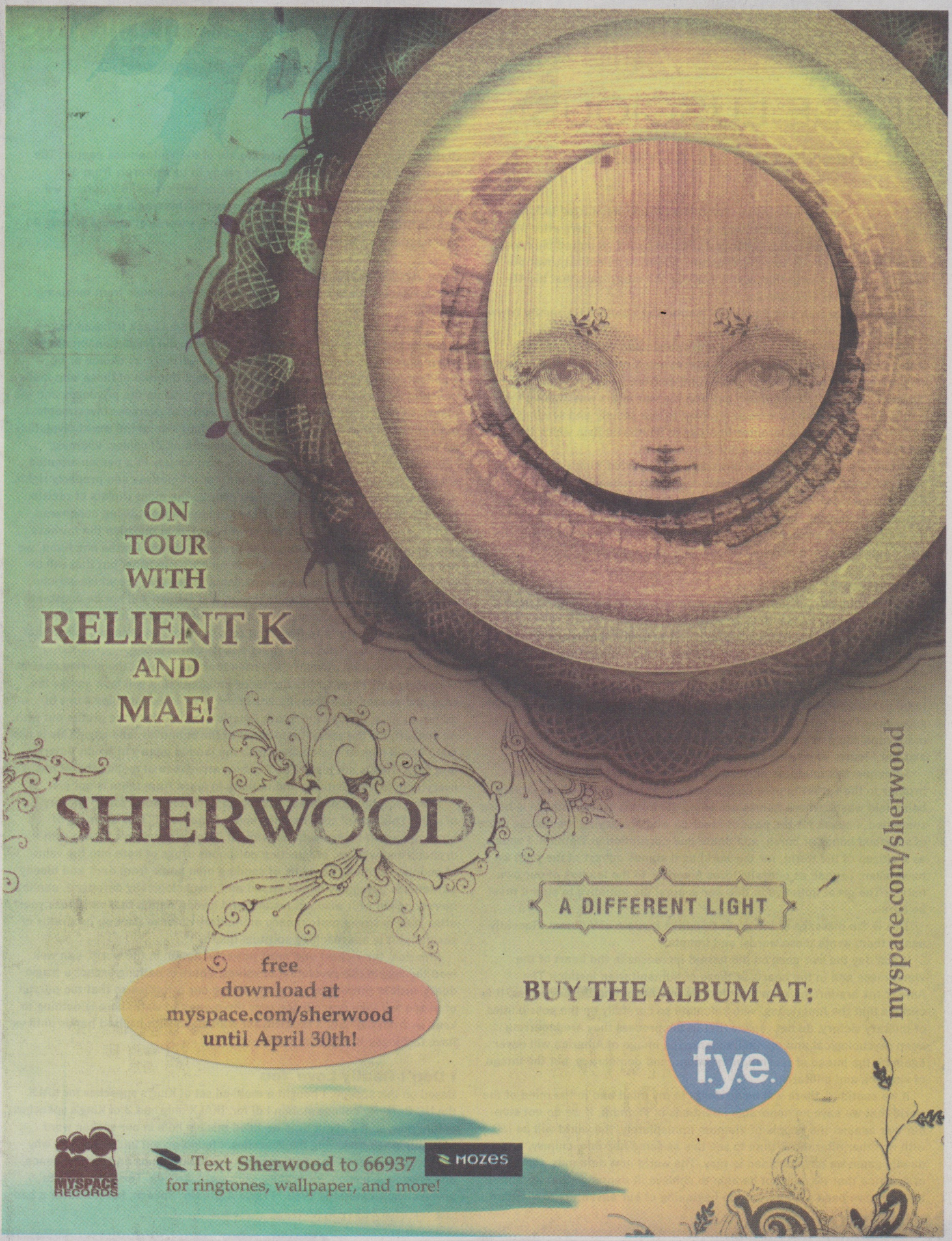
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JESSE LUSCIOUS

SHE DOESN'T LIKE ME ANYMORE

Last month I was giving someone a lift and we started talking about Martin Luther King Jr. It was a couple of days after MLK's birthday and she mentioned she had heard an incredible speech of his named "Beyond Vietnam" played in its entirety over the radio. One of the things that struck her was the many ways that his 40-year-old speech is still relevant.

The King Research and Education Institute at Stanford University [www.liberationcurriculum.org] writes:

"On 4 April 1967, King made his most public and comprehensive statement against the Vietnam War. Addressing a crowd of 3,000 people in New York City's Riverside Church, King delivered a speech entitled "Beyond Vietnam." King pointed out that the war effort was "taking the young black men who have been crippled by our society and sending them 13,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem."

Although some activists and newspapers supported King's statement, most responded with criticism. King's civil rights colleagues began to disassociate themselves with his radical stance and the NAACP issued a statement against merging the civil rights movement and peace movement. King remained undeterred, stating that he was not fusing the civil rights and peace movements, as many had suggested."

Hypnotized

From the American Rhetoric site [www.americanrhetoric.com], here are excerpts from this hard-hitting and insightful speech.

"... What we are submitting [US soldiers] to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease... I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours...

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

'Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.'

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war."

Substitute "Iraq" for "Vietnam" and King's words of almost exactly 40 years ago are sadly still relevant.

Life And Death (Of The Party)

Not convinced? Here's MLK's take on even larger issues from the same speech:

"... the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood."

I Don't Really Love You

Based on this speech, I bought a multi-cd set of King's speeches for KALX, the UC Berkeley college station I dj for. (KALX only had 2 of King's speeches before now, so it's about time we filled this big hole in our spoken word section!) When reviewing the speeches, I found myself understanding why King was so revered- in addition to his righteous stands on equality, peace, and economic justice, his oratory skills were striking. This isn't news to anyone who's heard his 1963 "I Have A Dream" speech, but it's never a bad

JESSE LUSCIOUS

idea to remember other incredible King moments like "Beyond Vietnam," "Speech At The Great March On Detroit" (which was his warm-up to the "I Have A Dream" speech), and his final speech the day before his 1968 assassination, "I've Been To The Mountaintop."

Personally, I am not a pacifist, and I don't think that all problems can be solved by dialog or by holding hands and chanting "Kumbaya"- but violence in a civilized country should always be discouraged. And in a world awash with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, war must be the very last resort for solving world problems. King knew this and gave notice (like many others at the time) that we have to stop putting the financial well-being of a few over the well-being of our entire society.

I am not discouraged by the time lapse that's seen our country continue to emphasize economic Darwinism. After all, there are powerful, rich forces that fight every day to keep our eyes away from the prize of a better world and instead try to keep us focused on a prize of a better income bracket and better consumer gadgets. It's taking time, but we must remember that we're the ones with real power. Without our money and our labor, the powerful become powerless. What are you waiting for?

Adding Up

2006's best full-lengths included Leftovers "Party Tonight!" (Cheapskate), Citizen Fish "What Time We On?" (Bluurg), Los Fastidios "Rebels 'N' Revels" (Mad Butcher), This Is My Fist "A History of Rats" (No Idea), Joan Jett and the Blackhearts "Sinner" (Blackheart), Subhumans "New Dark Age Parade" (Alternative Tentacles/G7), Hank Williams III "Straight To Hell" (Bruc), Jerry Jihad and the Evil Doers "Mine Is Not A Holy War" (Cordless), Off With Their Heads "Hospitals" (Recess), NOFX "Wolves In Wolves Clothing" (Fat), Ray Davies "Other People's Lives" (ignore the incredibly bad album art!), The Coup "Pick A Bigger Weapon" (Epitaph), Pansy Division "The Essential" (Alternative Tentacles), The Checkers "Running With Scissors" (Teenacide), Arnocorps "The Greatest Band of All Time" (Exactly), Dead To Me "Cuban Ballerina" (Fat), Toys That Kill "Shanked" (Recess), Lady Sovereign "Public Warning", and Against All Authority "The Restoration of Chaos and Order" (Hopeless). Also, one of the most welcome re-issues is the cd version of the Negative Trend (2-13-61) 4-song ep which was previously only on beautiful 12" vinyl on Subterranean Records. One of the best, most succinct and perfect punk records ever. Seriously, if you only check out one record in this paragraph, pick this one!

Turbohund East Bay, ruff!

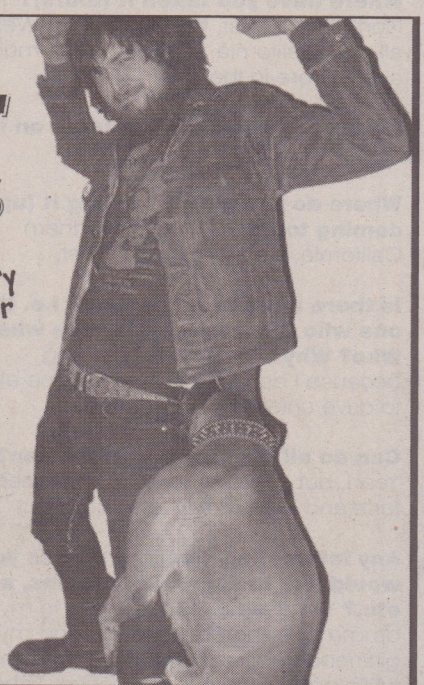
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BANDS AND THEIR VANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROM "TACTIC" DELFOSSE OF SKARE TACTIC

Full Name: Tom "Tactic" Delfosse
Band Name: Skare Tactic
Van Name: Blanco Grande
Make: Ford
Model: E-250
Year: 2005

Does the van have any interesting modifications, i.e. loft, bigger engine, diamond windows, fancy paint? Did you do them? Limo tint, smoke taillights and a loft. Yea, I did the modifications.

Where did you get it? We got it in Alabama when "Big Blue" took a shit on us. It was a toss up between $2,500 repair fee or putting that money towards a down payment and not worrying about breaking down again.

Is there any history behind the van? We wanted to get something reliable and stop wasting money that we didn't have for repairs on the road.

How long have you had it? Two and a half years.

Where have you taken it (tours)? The North East coast, the South, Mid-West all over California, Mexico, pretty much everywhere in the U.S.

How many miles have you put on it? About 43,000.

Where do you plan on taking it (upcoming tours)? Through Northern California, Canada, North West.

Is there a driver in the band, i.e. the one who is always behind the wheel? Who? Why? I'm generally driving because I don't really trust anyone else to drive unless I'm dead tired.

Can/do all of you sleep in the van? Yeah, but it really sucks when someone farts and leaves dirty ass socks out.

Any interesting sleeping stories you would like to share, i.e. dreams, sex, etc.? We used to park the van in my drummer's moms' driveway and my girlfriend and me went at it a few times while people were in the house... she liked it!

Do you or any one in the band do the maintenance? If so, to what extent? I wash it, all the regular maintenance. It's important to not break down, especially on tour, so I make sure everything is taken care of.



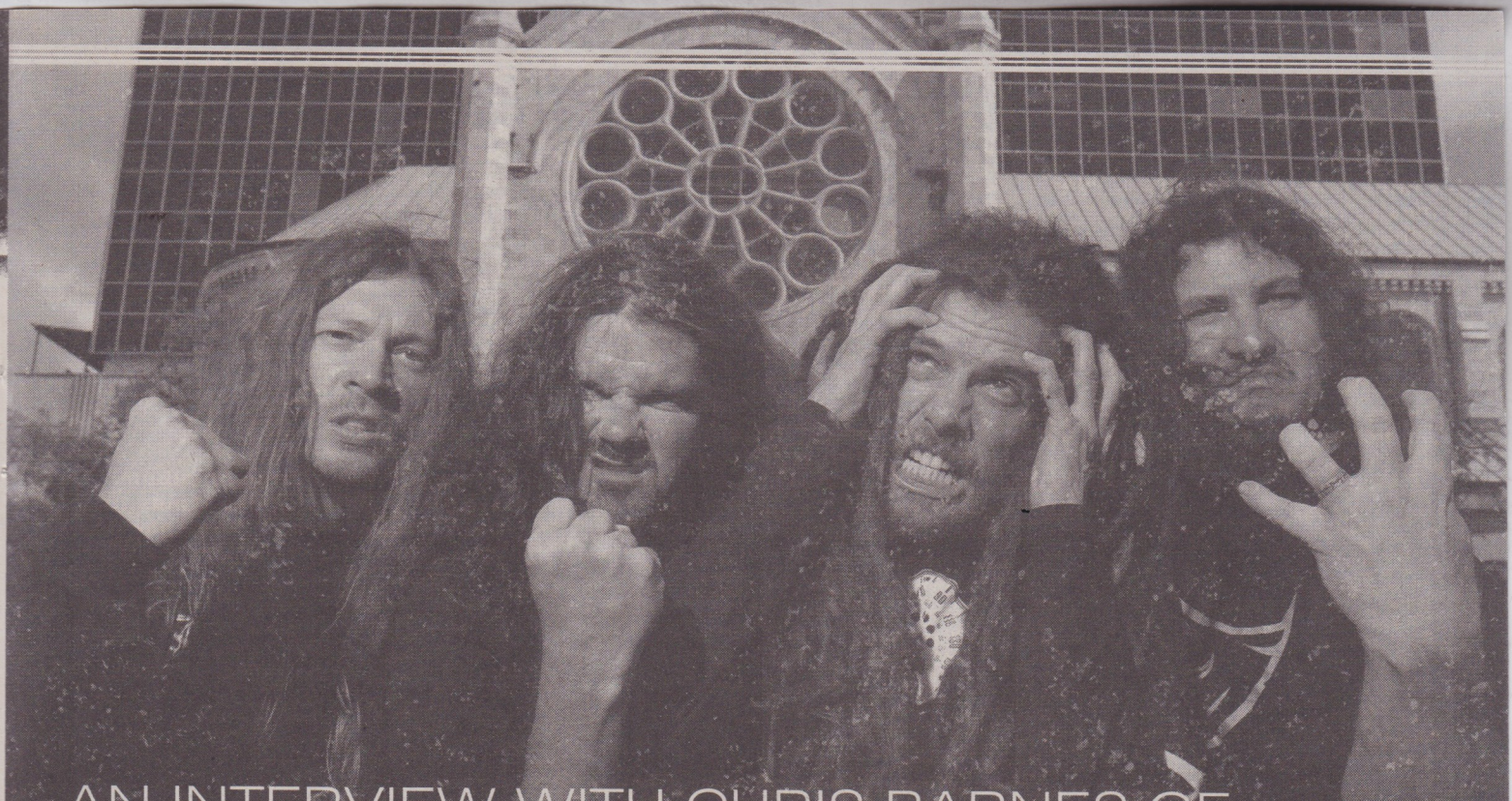
Tell me about the worst van related horror story, i.e. fire, accident, hit a deer, etc. We had a tire blow out on the old van because we had the wrong tires. The trailer was on it, but I managed to not get hit by anybody on the freeway and when we finally got a new tire, we realized the fuel pump was broke too. So we fixed all that, started driving again, when we got to the New Mexico border another tire blew out. The New Mexico sign reads, "Land of Enchantment", but we call it "Land of Entrapment". I dunno, it's really weird; we almost always have some kind of van trouble in New Mexico. Don't ask me why.

Does the band have any van rules? If so, what are they?

1. If you're drinking, don't drive.
2. If it's your turn to drive, don't drink.
3. Throw out your goddamn trash.
4. Wet shirts/socks/boxers are going to be thrown out.

Any advice for those bands that don't have a van and are looking to buy one? If it's cheap, it's probably not good. And if it's a good van, it's probably not cheap. Whoever agrees to help you pay for the van or help make the payments will probably quit or get kicked out before the loan is up! Be prepared to pay outta your pocket.

Tell me about your dream van? I don't want a dream van, I want an RV!



AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS BARNES OF

SIX FEET UNDER

By BillyBadBreaks

SIX FEET UNDER are, of course, one of the premier death metal bands, with over a decade of experience under their belt. As a long time fan of the band it was a great opportunity to speak to Chris while the band is putting the finishing touches to their new album. Before I spoke to him I was a little apprehensive as I was not sure what to expect. However, he was a charming, articulate and down to earth guy, with a great sense of humor. Here is the gist of our conversation:

Chris, after playing phone tag for weeks it is truly a pleasure to finally get to speak to you.
Yeah man.

You are a busy guy I guess?
Yeah, I have been kind of busy!

I understand that you have finished the album, is that right?
Yeah, the album is done. We have finally got it mastered about a month ago.

The album is called "Commandment" right? The only song I have heard off of it is "Doomsday", which is awesome. Is this the kinda direction the whole album is taking?
Thanks. Yeah, there is some variety on there, and "Doomsday" is one of the more mid-paced songs. We usually do our best to get a little bit of variety on each record, and it is a good song to get an overview of the record and what to expect.

I read in the press release, which I think was an interview with your bass player, that he saw the album as going back to your roots like "The Haunted" era, mixed with a more modern approach. Would you say that is what you were aiming for?
I haven't read that interview (with Terry). I don't like to compare our records with any of our previous ones. Each of our albums has it's own personality I have noticed over the years, and this is no different to that.

Every musician thinks their latest release is their best; otherwise they wouldn't put it out. How do you compare it to things you have done before? Do you look at this album ("Commandment") and say "Wow, this is a real step forward"?
Well, like I said it's got it's own personality; it is definitely it's own work. I've always been a big advocate of our most recent release being our best work. I like all our albums so it is hard to say this one is our best or worst, it fits in our discography pretty well. Ycu know, it is up to the fans to decide how they like it, so I will leave it up to them.

Yours is one of the few bands where

I like everything.
Thanks man.

I think it is the brutality of your music, which so few bands can consistently pull off.
It is definitely still a lot of fun writing new songs and getting in the studio and pulling everything together.

Have you ever thought of doing something totally different? You know, like throwing something acoustic on there, just because people wouldn't expect it?
You know, we really don't plan things like that; we just kinda let the writing flow out of us, as it wants to. We try not to plan too much or put too much of an expectation on what we are working on. We are not opposed to doing different things on our albums but things work there way out on there own.

Did you do the production on this album?
Yeah I did produce this record as well as the past few things we have released over the past four years or so.

Is this something you do for other bands?
I haven't yet, but I haven't been approached by anyone to do their records. I wouldn't be opposed to that.

If you could work with anyone?
I don't know, I never really gave it much thought. If a young band out there was getting started I think that would be more my forte than someone who was established.

Have you ever thought of collaborating with another band? The reason I ask is I think your particular vocal style would just fit with a different kind of music. Do you know the band FOETUS or MINISTRY, you know the more industrial sound?
Sure. I haven't been approached by anyone to collaborate or join them on a record. I have done some vocal appearances on other records, but they have been mostly death metal. I would definitely be interested in doing something like that, but I haven't been approached.

Do you guys write as a band, or do you write separately?
We write as a whole band pretty much, you know for the most part Steve and myself are the main songwriters; Terry does come up with a lot of riffs as well. But for the most part we are all in the same room and go at it head first and just write. I think the best way to go about it is to brainstorm and let the music work itself out.

Do you write all the vocals?
Yeah, I write all the vocal parts, all the lyrics, and these are written after the music is completed or at least sorted out. I usually go back with a CD or something of the song we are working on and write the vocal parts.

Are you one of these people who have lyrical ideas for a song and write them down waiting for the music that fits them?
Yes I do. I do tend to scribble things down and put them to one side for when we are writing. Whether it is song titles, an album title or a phrase or a main idea I do jot things down and keep them to one side until I am in writing mode and have some music to put the puzzle pieces together to figure out my storylines

Obviously a lot of your lyrics are very dark, are there any topics you absolutely avoid?
No, there really aren't. I try not to revisit things too much, like specifically revisit them. Everything is really a dark look at life and death; I am always in my zone for what I write about. I go where the story takes me, whatever my main idea is. I don't have any boundaries really, I think that is one of the great things about being a writer in this genre that I helped create and have been involved with for the past 17-18 years now.

Do you think people misjudge bands like SIX FEET UNDER as not having any sense of humor? I get comments thrown at me all the time that the music I listen to is so dark and miserable. Yet I see a lot of humor in it. To me it is story telling in a different way.
I haven't really been accused of not having a sense of humor (laughs). I think people that don't really know me personally tend to kind of think they know me through my music, and that is annoying at times. But I don't really know those people either so it is hard for me to care what people think if I don't really know them. I take it all with a pinch of salt. I think what people do for their career is not really what that person is in their daily life and family life. I tend not to really dwell on what people think and basically do what I think is enjoyable to me. If people don't get it, then they don't get it and I leave it at that.

A subject like politics, is this something you try and avoid?
Not really, I have attacked certain subjects and people could say they are political views and political ideas in songs. Everybody as a writer draws upon personal feelings and experiences so whatever a storyline or lyric I am working on I it flow. I kinda map things out in a way that seems philosophically right to me. I write it down and if it comes together that seems interesting to me then I go with it.

When you are writing an album, are you in one of these bands that write 30 songs, and then chops it down to 10 or 11 for the final release?
Usually we write our 10 or 11 songs and they are pretty much all keepers. There have been songs that we have written that didn't make the cut musically, and these are set a side for another day. For the mot part everything that is written ends up on the album. There have only been a couple of songs in our entire careers that have not made it. Usually we don't waste our time if something isn't sounding right, we start over and just write the keepers for the record.

SIX FEET UNDER are one of the most prolific bands in not just the death metal genre, but also any genre. You have been together 11 or 12 years and have released 8 albums, 3 DVDs and a box set! When you consider some bands do one album every 5 years, what motivates you work so hard?
Well, my point of view is it is now or never. No one ever knows how much time they have in this world, so I try and work as hard as I can on the music and lyrics and just enjoy doing what I do. There isn't an infinite amount of time to waste. This isn't something that is going to go on forever, so while we have the opportunity there is no reason to put it off really.

Believe me, as a fan we appreciate getting something regularly.
Thanks. With this record it has been a little bit longer than our last record of original material, but we did do a lot of touring. We did work really hard on this one and I hope it is worth the wait for the fans out there.

You said you tour a lot and this is a question my wife asked me how you manage to keep singing without ruining your voice?
It is just my voice. Like anything else you find out what works well for you.

and go with it. I always amused that people say, "Oh my God, he sings like that and it is going to destroy his voice!" Well, I have been singing this way for almost 20 years now and I can still sing the same way as I have always done. It is just like anything else you practice, you work at something and it becomes second nature. I open my mouth to music and that s what comes out. It is like with blues music, they thrive on the emotion of the song to motivate their approach and that is just what I do. You don't hear blues singers with raspy voices, or throat problems. Howlin' Wolf had a great voice for many, many years and he never lot his voice and I look at it the same way, it is just an extension of my being.

So you don't have to gargle with cough syrup like Jello Biafra on the DVD of the recording sessions of "In God We Trust, Inc"?
No, I have never had problems like that. The only thing that ever bothers me is if I don't get enough sleep or I get a cold, which is natural. I stay in fairly good shape, and am well rehearsed, which helps.

The criticism I hear of death metal in general is "I can't understand the words". Do you ever get annoyed that people cannot comprehend that it is an extreme form of music that isn't an easy listen and requires some effort?
It doesn't really annoy me, it just shows me who those people are that critique things like that. As I said before, you cannot spend your life worrying what other people think. If people don't get it they don't get it, I am not really here to make everyone understand what I am doing. It is art, you know? Pablo Picasso didn't have to explain his paintings, people didn't see what he saw when he painted or drew. It wasn't his job to explain to these shallow-minded people what it was about, and as an artist I feel the same. I put things out there, but it is not my purpose or job to explain my art to people. If they get it then that is very nice, but if they don't then they just don't.

I presume with the new record you will be going out on tour? Please say at some point you will be coming out to Ohio at some point?
Yeah, we usually get out that way, we have some great fans in Ohio. We had a really great show at Peabody's in Cleveland on the last tour in mid-October.

What is the crowd reaction to you over in Europe?
We've got a really great following. Europe has been really good to me throughout my career and this band for a long time. We get a lot of repeat fans over at the shows and it is incredible how they embrace our music. We get to ply a lot of the bigger shows that I have played. In Germany we have a particularly large following and so it is always great to go over there, but it is a little bit more difficult to get around. It is a great time and people are always appreciative of what we do so that is a positive thing that keeps us going.

Have you ever been to Japan?
No, I haven't been there at all, but I hear it is very different over there.

I have to ask about the two "Graveyard Classics" albums. The first one I really like as you choose a variety of bands to cover, some of which people might not associate with you, like the DEAD KENNEDYS. Are these bands that you happen to really like and what was your thinking behind the album?
All the covers we have done have been favorites of different members of the band, and that kinda influenced us, or bands we were fans of.

Your version of "Purple Haze" is one of my favorite songs ever, as you took a classic and made it something so different, which is especially difficult with something by Hendrix.
Thanks man. I think my vocals kinda changed things up a bit (laughs). We tried to stick to the original version musically, but my vocals make the song sound different.

Did you know Howard Stern has been playing that song?
Yeah, I heard about all that stuff and however I can entertain people is good.

They were kinda making fun of it...
You have to understand where a person is coming from when they critique your work and what you do. He has never heard death metal before so that is how I assume someone would react, especially being in their mid-50's and never hearing any heavy music like death metal. He really has no idea of what it is about or what is behind it. I expect that from people but it is not my job to tell people, if they are entertained in any way I did my job. It is always good to get free press out of something like that

You are obviously a big fan of AC/DC. You have been doing "TNT" for years, right?
We always break that out when we go over to the big festivals in Europe, as the crowds really love it. It is not like we do that song every night though, just if the crowd is really kicking ass and people are asking for it. AC/CD were one of my favorite bands growing up, the same with the rest of the guys in the band and their music lends itself really well to our style.

Have you had any feedback from them?
Not really. A friend of mine here in Tampa knows Brian Johnston pretty well through racing and he told them about us. I didn't hear the reaction but I think he heard of what we are doing. I haven't had the chance to meet those guys or anything. I hope they don't take it the wrong way, I hope they realize we are paying homage and it is a tribute to their heaviness.

"Graveyard Classics II" is something I play an awful lot.
"Graveyard II" was really my idea. I wanted to do something different and I think I accomplished what I set out to do on that one. A lot of our fans enjoyed it and some people didn't, like most of our stuff. I think we did a great job and is ahead of its time like most stuff we do. Most people don't respond to it until later on.

Some of those songs have been out over 20 years, and I obviously love your vocals, and you totally changed those songs.
We really worked hard on staying true to the music on that record. If you put those CDs on simultaneously they are in complete time with each other, beat by beat. I think we accomplished something special with that album.

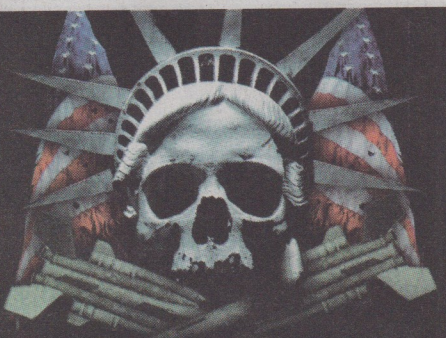
An obvious question is somewhere down the road do you a volume three in mind?
There is always that chance that we will do another "Graveyard Classics".

Are you taking requests?
(Laughs) we are always taking requests man. I m sure in the next few years we will sort something out with another "Graveyard" as our fans do seem to enjoy our cover versions.

Any last comments?
I hope everyone enjoys the new CD when it comes out; we are really looking forward to seeing what our fans think of it.

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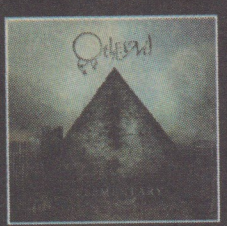
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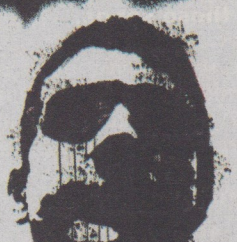
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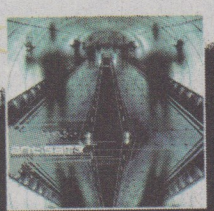
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AKIMBO

INTERVIEW WITH JON WEISNEWSKI

By Philip Fairbanks

Akimbo features former members of Homo Eradicus and Tight Bros From Way Back When, but how did the band actually come to be? Akimbo actually started before any of us were involved in Homo-Eradicus and The Tight Bros. It has been a long grueling path that Nat Damm and I have trekked since we were teenagers. Aaron Walters is our newest guitar player and he's an excellent fit, we're glad he's sticking around. However, answering your question is tough because it's such a long story, so I'll sum it up like this: We are dudes who like to have rock. Thus, we agree that rock shall be had.

Nat's posters and other artwork are incredible. The album covers themselves are works of art as well, and encapsulate a kind of eerie quality that is echoed in your music. Nat's listed as layout designer, but does the band participate in the theme of the album art beforehand?
Nat is very open to our suggestions and criticism, so yes we do participate. I love that he's given our records such a unique visual style.

Tight Bros was somewhat politically active in the 90's. Does any of that carry over into Akimbo? Especially being on a label headed by ex-Dead Kennedy and spoken word artist Jello Biafra.
As far as I know Tight Bros started the band to play ass shaking rock n' roll at house parties, which I suppose could be considered political by a stretch, but Nat will have to answer that question as he was the Akimbo member that was part of that band. As far as Akimbo being a "political" band, I can say that as individuals we are all very aware of local, national, and international affairs and we all vote. We give a shit. But as a band we come together for the purpose of making music that we love and is satisfying to play, and we play shows to bring a flaming cudgel of loudness down on our audience. Politics have never really been a motivational factor for the band.

What's it like being on Alternative Tentacles?
Very, very good. The staff is so awesome and supportive of us, we have a lot of freedom with them. Jello is great and we're honored that he asked us to be on the label. Very literally, it's our 14 year old dreams come true.

I've heard your music compared to Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, but when I heard Delilah it sounded more like Robert Plant experiencing severe roid rage. What bands other than the previous played a role in the formation of the Akimbo sound?
Too many to list here. A lot of classic rock, 70's and 80's punk, early 90's underground rock, and a smattering of hardcore and metal bands. That and ABBA.

Digging a hole and other tracks from Forging Steel and Laying Stone have, from what I can discern, some very dark lyrics. Where does the inspiration for these songs come from?
The scene in Gremlins 2 when Gizmo puts on a head band and plays Rambo. That shit is awesome.

You guys have been around for a few years. How has the band developed over this time?
We haven't. I still spend all my free time playing D&D and video games. I can't save money because I spend it on tattoos and burritos. We still don't have real jobs because we can't stop going on tour and partying every night for a month.

Looks like most of your shows this January were in the Northwest where you're located. Full U.S. tour begins in March. I've never had a chance to see you guys live, but I've heard the experience is pretty wild. What warning would you give fans who might be attending one of your shows for the first time?
Chainmail would not be un-wise.

What does the future hold for Akimbo? It's been almost a year since Forging Steel, is there another album in the works yet?
Yes. We're working on a whole bunch of new material for a new record that will hopefully be out in 2007. I'm very excited about the new stuff. ↖



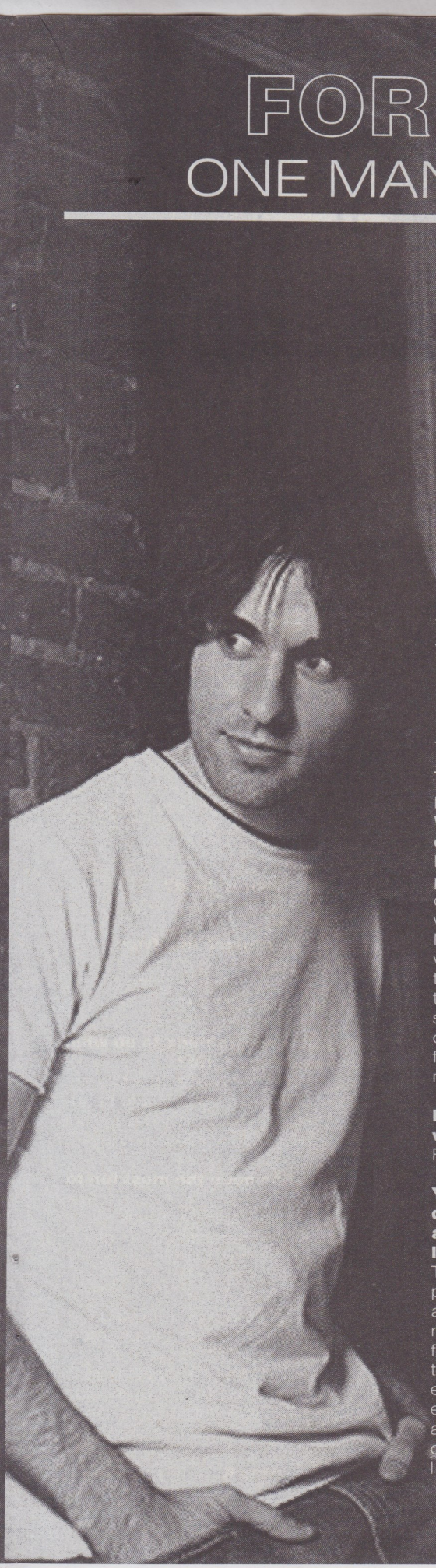
FOREVERINMOTION

ONE MAN ON A MUSICAL MISSION

INTERVIEW WITH BRENDAN THOMAS

By Jen Conrad

It's not very often that you find an artist who relies solely on himself to create his own musical experience. Whether it's help with production, the demands of a label, or input from a songwriting/lyrical perspective, most bands and artists have some sort of interaction with someone else during the recording process. But that's not the way Foreverinmotion does it. Foreverinmotion is the creative alter-ego of Brendon Thomas, a Vermont native who is ready to create a new music revolution! Foreverinmotion is about to release its second album called "The Beautiful Unknown" on One Eleven Records. After a self-created debut, Brendon has learned a few things about the recording process, honed his skills, and penned some marvelous, heartfelt tunes for "The Beautiful Unknown". Once you hear the songs, you'll be even more amazed in the inventive genius that is Brendon Thomas...and you'll be especially astounded that Brendon's recording "studio" isn't your typical studio... Before the May release of "The Beautiful Unknown," take some time to get to know the mastermind behind Foreverinmotion!



How did you get started in music? What made you decide that you wanted to be a musician?
I played alto sax through the school program when I was 10. I did that and drums throughout high school. On a whim, I decided to learn guitar when I was 14, and I formed my first band when I was 15. I also started singing at that time. Right from the get-go, I knew that I wanted to live my life playing music. The fire was there! As time went on, I developed my talents and began focusing solely on making music my career.

If you had to describe your music in 3 words, what would they be?
From the heart.

Your first album was primarily all done by you... production, writing, and touring...tell us what that was like.
The first album was basically an experiment. I got the idea to try out some acoustic songs I had written with a multi-track recording program that a friend gave me. I stapled bed sheets to my bedroom ceiling and created an enclosure to work in. I barely had any equipment...just a mixer, an SM-57 and a Nady condenser mic. The entire process was a learning experience for me. I learned how to record and produce... how to build songs up one instrument at a time and create the ambience I always loved so much in songs by bands like Jimmy Eat World and Sigur Ros. I also discovered and developed aspects of my singing voice I never knew I had. The writing process was organic. I just wrote acoustic songs and built them up with bass, piano, percussion and whatever I could come up with...alone in my bedroom. Touring was another story. Some of my friends helped me form a band to perform parts of the album, and I did my best to book a few tours. We did some regional stuff and one east coast tour over the course of about a year. They were all super talented, great guys to play with, but the band became stressful for me...I felt like it wasn't going in the right direction. So I honored my gut feeling to go back to playing solo, and the decision was cathartic. I realized how much of a loner I am, and how happy I am to do this alone!

Your upcoming album, "The Beautiful Unknown" is due out in May. You're basically working solo on this one too...why do you prefer to work alone as opposed to working with a producer?
Like I said, I love working alone. The presence of another person inside that very private world of my musical creativity is stifling to me and my ability to be

entirely honest in my performances. I recorded "The Beautiful Unknown" in the same bedroom and in the same fashion as the first album. The only difference was that I invested in some nicer equipment and mics, and I knew what I was doing (technically speaking) from the start of the album. The only time I had anyone else with me during the recording was for a few guest performances. The rest of time I was entirely alone.

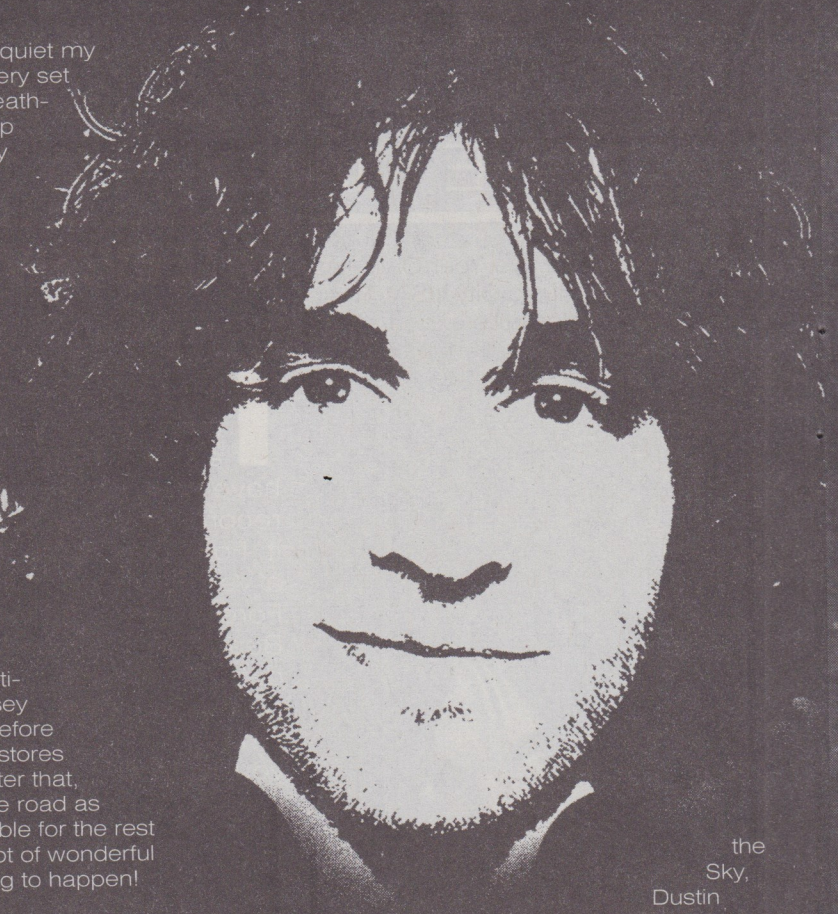
How does "The Beautiful Unknown" differ from the self-titled debut? Did having the backing of a label make a difference in the making of the new album?
My abilities have developed and matured so much since the first album, and it's pretty obvious if you take the time to compare. Lyrically and vocally, I've made leaps and bounds with "The Beautiful Unknown." Musically, I think the performances are tighter and more compelling. Production-wise, there's no contest. The album sounds like a studio recording. I was discovered and signed to One Eleven Records months after I finished the album, so there was no label influence during the recording process.

Tell us about your songwriting process... how does a song come to fruition for you?
I go through creative periods, like a bubble that fills until it eventually bursts. When that happens, even a little idea will snowball into something and the songs just come out. I find a lot of joy in those times because I love waking up, picking up my guitar, and an hour later, having something I'm really proud of and wondering where it came from! Then when I record, I work out the kinks and develop the song into its fullest realization.

How many instruments do you play? Do you have a favorite?
I think I play around 7 instruments, not counting the tambourine (I'm a phenomenal tambourine player, for the record.) My favorites are guitar, piano, and mandolin.

Your live performances are said to be amazing! What is your goal with your live performance? How do you make sure to achieve that goal each time you perform?
My goal is to feel what I'm singing about during the performance, and to connect that to the audience...not to just go through the motions, but to really put myself into the songs, and bring as many people as I can with me for the ride. It's all in the vocals, the lyrics, and the energy I put into it. On a good night, I'll fall into one of the quieter parts of a song, and there's not a person talking. Everyone is in it with me, and it's a really beautiful feeling! I always try to meditate, or at least quiet my mind before every set with mindful breathing while I set up my stuff. It really helps me focus when it comes time to play.

What are your tour plans to support "The Beautiful Unknown"?
I'm doing a promotional tour with my label mates Rookie of the Year in April, which will be really good! I'm playing the Bamboozle festival in New Jersey the weekend before the album hits stores on May 8th. After that, I'll be out on the road as much as possible for the rest of the year. A lot of wonderful things are going to happen!



What song will be the first single from the album? Why was that one chosen?
The first "single" is going to be "Hot Air Balloon." I'll be filming a video for the song sometime next month. I chose it because it has been a fan favorite at shows, it has a positive message, and the chorus is one of the strongest on the record.

Do you have a favorite song on the upcoming album?
That's like choosing a favorite child! I love them all!

Tell us something that people would be surprised to know about you...
Sometimes I wear a retainer at night.

Where do you hope to be as an artist in 5 years?
At the forefront of the next musical and cultural revolution.

What would you like to say to people to get them to check you out?
I'm not going to say anything, other than you are welcome here any time, and if you choose to listen, I hope will you find something in the music that speaks to you.

What is in your CD player (or on your ipod) right now?
This is what I listened to on my flights to and from Austin this week: Explosions in the Sky, Dustin Kensrue's solo record, Jeremy Enigk, Call It Arson, Fiona Apple, Doves, Fly Upright Kite, Nickel Creek, Mozart, Rocky Votolato, The Weakerthans.

What is your favorite food?
Falafel, sushi, carob brownies.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever gotten?
"Always sing for the people in the balcony, not the orchestra pit."

What is your favorite thing to do while on tour besides perform?
I love to visit the zoo, or spend a day at the ocean, or if we're some place beautiful, to go exploring. I don't like to go out drinking. I'm a pretty wholesome guy.

Which band has been the most fun to meet?
Devin Lima & the Cadbury Diesel. They're the most interesting and entertaining combination of people in one band I've met!

What a multi-faceted man with staggering talent! Foreverinmotion's sophomore album, "The Beautiful Unknown" is coming at you in May! Fans of Damien Rice, Sigur Ros, and Bob Dylan should be counting the days until this release. Be sure to look for Foreverinmotion at a venue near you. Thanks to Brendon for taking time with us!

LENNY

By John B. Moore

With recent national attention on bands like The Pink Spiders and Be Your Own Pet, Nashville is finally living up to its rep as Music City USA. The post-emo rockers in Lenny are the latest Nashville export helping to make up for all that dreadful neon cowboy music the city has been pumping out over the years. The band is fronted by J.D. Dickerson, a veteran of the Nashville music scene who was banging on drums at 10 years old in the aptly named Christian pop-punk band Squirt. The son of original Prince guitarist Dez Dickerson, J.D. spent the better part of his middle school years touring. On the eve of releasing their eight-song EP "We Are Criminals", J.D. spoke about high school bands, the pull of music and life as a pre-teen rocker.

So let's start out with a question you'll soon be sick of answering what's with the name Lenny?
The band's name, yeah, a lot of people think it comes from anything from the comedian Lenny Bruce to Lenny Kravitz. It's actually from a Tom Hanks movie called "That Thing You Do." That's just always been a favorite of mine, so I named the band after the guitar player in the movie. It was sort of surreptitious, actually. Our first show, like four years ago, we had to submit a name, but we didn't have a name yet. I told everybody I liked the name Lenny, but they hated it. I was the first one to get the e-mail saying we had to submit the name, so I just went ahead and submitted Lenny and we've had it ever since.

There are four guys in the band, but there's only two credited on the record, you and bassist Jason Gilmore.
That's sort of an interesting story. Lenny started about four years ago and it was me, and one of my buddies I had been in bands with for about seven years, and we both played guitar and we started the band and we had a drummer and our first three or four shows we had a different bass player each show. After a couple of months we sort of had a line up that stuck for about two and a half years. Last summer, we reached a point where me and
Jason wanted to do it full time and try and make a career out of it and the other two guys decided they wanted to settle down and start families. We split with them and were in the middle of recording the EP, so me and Jason just sort of did it on our own. It was right at that time that we parted ways with the others that everything sort of clicked and we were able to get the CD out.

You started playing in this band in high school. At what point did you think, let's make a career out of this?
It was sort of a thing where I had tried almost everything else 'I want to be a filmmaker, I want to play college football'. I wanted to do all this stuff and music was the only thing that really stuck. It was the only thing that I really had a constant love for. Music just sort of picked itself and won out over everything else.

With you, The Pink Spiders, Paramore and Be Your Own Pet, it kind of seems like the rest of the world is realizing that Nashville is much more than session musicians and country music.
I totally agree. I don't know if there's any one thing to pinpoint, but it's been a natural progression. Going back to when we started this band, there really wasn't that much rock coming out of Nashville. The only thing I can think of was this band called The Features that made this first real break out of Nashville and I think it drew attention to a scene here that had been growing steadily over time, but it all sort of hit critical mass at the same time. These bands, including us, sort of took advantage of the attention that was brought here. It's definitely a wild thing, because a lot of these bands I remember seeing play at high school talent shows and now you see them on TV.

Is it a pretty competitive music scene?
I enjoy it. It's kind of hard to define. It's competitive in a sort of subdued, unspoken sense. There's just a lot of really good bands in town, so it's definitely a situations where you feel you've always got to be on the top of your game. There's another aspect of it where there is always new talent rising to the surface, so it's an ever changing landscape. There is a sense of camaraderie about the bands, but at the same time they motivate each other.

You were in a pop/punk band when you were 10, did that prepare you at all for what you are now doing?
I think I learned just how difficult it is. How much you just have to really love it and how much you have to work for it and really sacrifice for it to be able to do it on any sort of level of success.

Did you get to tour around a lot in that band?
Yeah, we did. We toured around the country for like three years. That was sort of like my middle school and I came back and sort of decided, I wouldn't say I got burnt out, but I,d been doing music for as long as I remembered and I sort of wanted to try the flip side of the coin. So I went back to high school and tried to put music on the back burner. That kind of goes back to that question earlier, and I couldn't really ditch it. I tried for awhile, but came back.

With your dad playing guitar, did he ever try to discourage you from making a career out of this, knowing how hard it can be?
My parents have always just been really supportive of anything I have tried to do, whether it be music or anything. My dad was just as supportive when I said, "Hey, I want to quit this band and play high school football." They've just been really great in the sense that they've allowed me to sort of make my decisions by trial and error.

The songs that are on the EP, are these ones that you've had around for awhile?
It sort of varies. We did a couple of independent EPs that we just released in town and at shows, so a couple of the songs have been around for a while. I think "After the Rain" is the oldest and I wrote that one when I was 14 or 15 and some of the newer ones we wrote a week or two before we recorded.

So what are your plans after the record comes out?
We want to tour as much as possible off of this CD and support it as much as we can and hopefully spread it around to as many people who are willing to give it a listen. Our hope is just to be able to do this as long as we possibly can. We'd love to continue on. We,re looking forward to making a full length hopefully in the not too distant future.

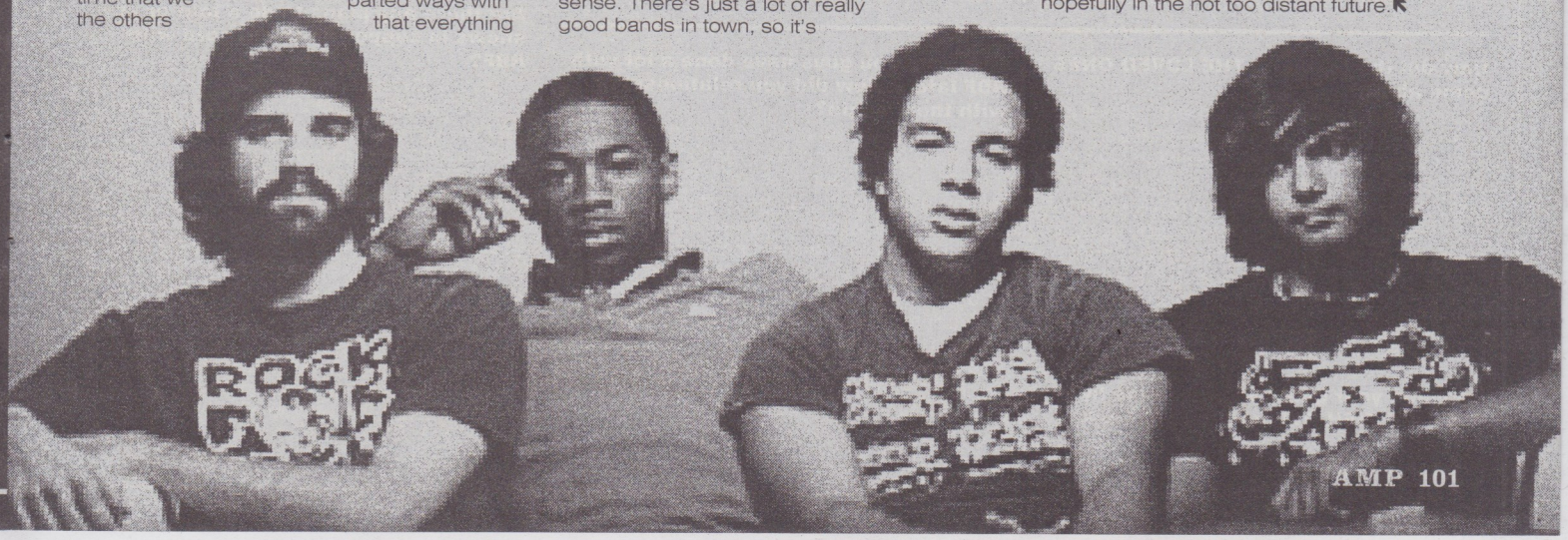


PHOTO: JOANNE VITALE



ZOLOF

THE ROCK & ROLL DESTROYER

AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL MINTON & VINCE RATTI

Interview by William David Jones & Kevin Haverty
Intro & Photography by William David Jones

ZOLOF THE ROCK & ROLL DESTOYER is a breath of fresh air in a music scene that often takes itself too seriously. The publicity term, spunk rock, doesn't quite do their style enough justice. Its infectious pop-infused rock style, complete with keyboards, is so sugar-coated it may be dangerous for diabetics. Still, the underlying "evil themes" make their sound more than what it appears on the surface. Though some label issues have postponed the release of a new full-length from the band, their split with REEL BIG FISH, *Duet All Night Long*, and the recent digital release of *Unicorns, Demos, B-Sides & Rainbows*, should keep fans happy for awhile. Vocalist and keyboardist Rachel Minton (R) and guitarist Vince Ratti (V) took some time to shoot the breeze with AMP on their recent tour with Philly cohorts THE LOVED ONES.

How did the tour with THE LOVED ONES come about?
R: We did a short stint with them, about a year ago, and we had a blast. Maybe just a week or so—it was really, really fun. We did all the East coast cities—D.C., Baltimore, Philly, New York. It was just a really rad tour. We got along really well. It's weird—people always ask me how it's going to go 'cause THE LOVED ONES are punk rock, but they're punk rock with a pop edge, so their crowd kind of blends well with ours, and it just makes all the shows really awesome.

Between your guest vocals on the live REEL BIG FISH DVD and the split out in February, you guys have done a lot with RBF lately. How did you relationship with them begin?
R: Basically, we just toured with them and I'm really weird, and so is Aaron, so we hit it off really well, automatically. We had been talking about doing duets and things like that because when we were on tour they asked me to sing the girl parts in "She Has A Girlfriend Now". I was all nervous because their fans are insane! I did it for them most of the tour—whenever I was feeling feisty I'd go out and sing it. He liked it, and I liked it, and we didn't think our voices sounded terrible together, so we knew we wanted to do something besides that. Then, the record label actually approached us (Reignition) and they said, "Hey, you guys want to do a split CD? Low-pressure, take your time doing it, just for fun..." and I think it is.

How did you go about choosing the six tracks for it?
R: We went through a shitload of 'em.
V: We ended up picking all the super pop hits from the 80s. We initially did a bunch of obscure indie selections from the 90s too, demoed, but we decided to go with the pop hits.
R: The one song we didn't demo, which we were actually planning on doing was Phil Collins "Easy Lover".
V: We actually recorded all the music for that...
R: ...then we realized it's perfect the way it is.

Are there any plans to do a tour or any shows in support of this record with RBF?
R: Yeah, it's kind of tentative. When we first started talking about the split we decided that we were going to back it up with a tour, but it's kind of juggling two bands that are always moving, so it's kind of hard to get us to coordinate together in order to do a couple shows or a tour. We were also thinking about doing a video, but when are we both going to be in the same place at the same time? But we both use the same director for videos, Jonathan London. He did their "Don't Start A Band" video and our "Argh... I'm A Pirate" video. He was just going crazy at the idea of actually doing something for the split. Even if it just came down to us



doing a video for "Don't You Want Me" and Aaron doing a cameo, he said he could work that out...I don't even know. We've just talked about it.

So, you've got a split and the digital release of b-sides, but what happened to the new album you had planned for early 2006?
R: Shit, that's right.
V: We did a record, on our own, with no budget.
R: We were trying to leave Eyeball at the time, and we ended up parting ways. We did a record and we took it with us and we still have it. If you go to Myspace and hear our "Can't Stand It" demo, it's actually part of our record, just not mixed or mastered or anything.
V: There's a record done that doesn't have a home right now. So, we're talking to some labels and seeing if we can find the right home for it.
R: If we don't find the right home for the record, we might just go ahead and release it ourselves.
V: We really need a record out.

How would you describe ZOLOF to someone who has never heard it before?
V: It's just rock music, just fun rock music. It's like being beaten on the head with a candy bar.
R: I worded it really well before on the radio interview—really happy pop-rock with underlying evil themes.

You've opened for a wide variety of bands in different genres—some hardcore shows and everything else. How well does ZOLOF go over when it's something that different?
V: Depends. We can get away with a lot more in Philadelphia. We run a studio and we record a lot of hardcore and metal bands, so we can play those shows and we all kind of know each other. We don't really press that too far outside the area.
R: Oh, I love playing hardcore shows in Philly, 'cause we'll play with two hardcore bands, us, and then a hardcore headliner, and people will just two-step through our set.

So, where did the band's name come from, and how did you two actually meet...or are you sticking with the summer camp story from the bio?
R: Noooo. It's a lie. It's a great lie, but it's a lie. We figured, who wants to read the real history of us?
V: Band bios are so boring...Joe Shmo met Joe Shmo 2...might as well entertain. We met like all bands meet and get together.

You're welcome to make up another story...
R: We were at space camp, and we all met and we were all really into it. I thought I was definitely going to be an astronaut...
V: The reason we were all at space camp is we were all contestants on Double Dare...
R: ...that right!
V: ...and we won.
R: So, when we first got together, we decided we were going to do a space themed band—everything would be space rock [laughs].
V: One thing lead to another...
R: ...and it just evolved and changed into pop music. We ate a lot of the astronaut ice cream.

Before the days of ZOLOF, how did you get interested in music?
R: Mine's really good. I got my MTV taken away from me when I was really young, because I used to (I'm going to show my age at this point)—I had to be four, or maybe five—jump on the bed and sing VAN HALEN and stuff. My mom just couldn't take it anymore. She actually threatened me a bunch at the time, and then finally took MTV away because it was making me too rowdy.
V: Elementary school, fourth grade Halloween parade, I was Dee Snider.
R: His mom made the costume.
V: Yeah, my mom made the costume—had a little microphone. I was a little transsexual rocker walking around. I wanted to be in TWISTED SISTER when I was in fourth grade.

What's the Philly music scene like?
R: Philidelphia fuckin' rules! All the bands I know are really supportive of everybody else. If you look at THE LOVED ONES (they're from Philly too), they're taking out a Philly band. We just support each other.

What do you think of the current music scene? It seems that ZOLOF is the exact opposite of the depressing emo/screamo trend that's so popular.
R: It's crazy! I don't even know what's going on. Sometimes I'll listen to the radio and be like, what is going on?
V: We started listening to satellite radio, and we just listen to E! True Hollywood Story and Discovery Channel shows. I can tell you all kinds of shit about Todd Bridges.
R: When you turn on the Alternative Nation, some of the music...I don't understand where it's going...
V: What was that fuckin' band I heard yesterday?
R: Don't say their name.
V: I'm going to say their fuckin' name. We listened to it—this is the biggest piece of shit I've ever heard.
R: The one with that guys crappy voice...
V: Just kept saying the same thing over and over again. Rolling Stone gave 'em a five or something.
R: There is some good music out there too, I think...
V: There's always the DEATH CABs and the SAVES THE DAYs
R: DEATH CAB is always going to be great. They always have been great.

Last Record You Listened To – Good or Bad?
R: DAYS AWAY. We love it. It's amazing—didn't get recognized like it should have.
V: Another Philly band.

Last Movie – Good or Bad?
R: Night at the Museum—it was okay.

Favorite Drink
R: Beer—Sam Adams

Favorite Band to Tour With
R: Right now, THE LOVED ONES.

Band You'd Most Like to Tour With
V: AGAINST ME!
R: There's so many...
V: GENESIS?
R: [Laughs]
V: AGAINST ME! and GENESIS—same package.

Favorite Cover
R: "Don't You Want Me", I think. All the ones on *Duet All Night Long*.

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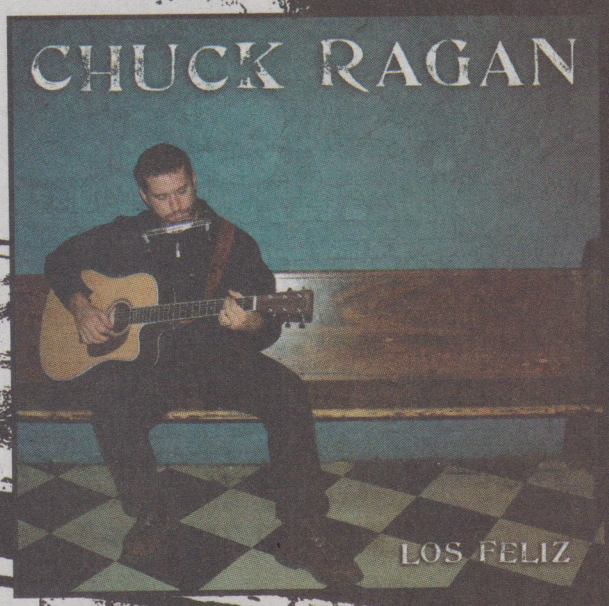
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As the title of the record (taken from a haiku which reads: "*since my house burned down I now own a better view of the rising moon*") suggests, ***1997*** is concerned with sorting through needless worry and distraction to discover essential truths in life, and finding positive linings in all of life's dark grey clouds.

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The Ataris

By John B. Moore / Photography By Piper Ferguson

The Ataris have been through a lot of changes over the past decade, but the biggest adjustments came over the last 12 months, when half of the band broke off, they fled their record label and found a new sound in the process.

Despite parting with bassist Mike Davenport and drummer Chris Knapp, front man and guitarist Kris Roe and second guitarist John Collura decided to soldier on, eventually attracting five new members. At the same time, they looked around and did not recognize anyone at their label Columbia/Sony. Not feeling that much connection with the record company, they decided to ask for permission to walk away and landed back on an indie label, all the while finding their sound evolve from the melody-heavy pop punk of teenagers to a much more mature, atmospheric rock vibe.

On the eve of the band's latest release "Welcome the Night", Kris called AMP to talk about losing his drummer and bass player, pilfering the rhythm section of another band and the freedoms of recording once again on an indie label.

I guess it's been awhile since you've done an interview.
Yea, we've taken a bit of time off, but now it's all starting again and we're out and ready to start the process.

The new record sounds a lot different from your earlier ones. Was there a concerted effort to make it sound different?
Not at all. With "So Long Astoria," John and I felt like we were very limited in what we could create. Prior to "So Long Astoria," the thing that I would like to make clear is that this band felt as if it was me creating everything. Musically, what I was into, the drummer never got it. He just wanted to go out there and be the biggest rock star that he could be and I don't blame him for that. That's what he needed to do. With Mike, we were always best friends and he was a really good person, but he got involved with a lot of issues that I didn't feel reflected our band and it was things I disagreed with and in the end I just don't think the musicianship was there with Mike... John and I just had to move on. We started playing music with three friends from the town where he lives. They were in a local indie rock band called Park Ranger and we just kind of stole their rhythm section and started playing music. When we played together the first time, I was like "something just feels new and alive and fresh again." All I was thinking about is that this is what I remember feeling the day this band started. Everything comes around full circle, they say, and it fucking did. We started going into the studio, and for lack of a better word, we did a lot of jamming. I had a bunch of ideas and John had a bunch of ideas, but everyone else had ideas as well, and for once everyone was songwriters. The only part that was conscious was that we didn't want to limit ourselves to just being a guitar band. I think John and I felt, ok we have three guitars, but let's kind of twist this idea of adding keys and a cello (Angus Cooke and Bob Hoag) came out to New York, started playing and these songs took on phase two and we worked them all again.

How did it sound?
We were like "Oh my God, this doesn't feel wrong yet," so we



definitely knew that we hadn't gone too far, so we keep pushing the boundaries. At no point did we ever say "All right let's consciously think about what we should or should not create." It was like "all right, this feels like The Ataris feel still," so who's to say what this band should be or shouldn't be? All I know is this feels like the music I listen to and I think when we created "So Long Astoria," that was me doing a last ditch effort, trying to make just a solid rock record, but even at that point I think we were getting lumped in with music that did not represent us.

And how did you react?

We were just kind of like "fuck everyone." Let's just continue to do what we want to do and if people like it good and if they don't there are 300 other bands with eyeliner, make up and perfect hair and they can go buy their records, because that's not what we're about. I turned 30 this year and wrote "Blue Skies" at 19. We play a lot of songs from that record and I think they still sit well today when I play them with songs from this record, when we play them with this line up. But there are also some songs that are more towards the more silly side of things that we weren't even playing when we were a four piece doing "So Long Astoria." I think that's the thing people forget. We all grow at different levels and there are people discovering "Blue Skies" for the first time today. And they may find when they go to a show and hear us play live now, that they'll get into something that they never imagined we would be. We'll never turn our back on where we are from and what we were, but at the same time, we hope that people will grow with is. I just want to be up there singing what I believe in. I never want to be a fucking puppet.

"So Long Astoria" was the first album to really get picked up by commercial radio and reach a new audience. Did you feel a lot of pressure following it up?

Not at all. We started our own record label, Isola Recordings, and we partnered with a small indie-based label called Sanctuary Records Group and they have a lot of bands that are more artists and that reassured me to think we are dealing with people who really get what bands are about and not just the business side of things. They are actually the same distribution as Sony and Columbia, so you'll still be able to go into Target, Best Buy and all of those places and get our record. But we don't have to deal with a staff of 30 people and their corporate mentality. It's just a good feeling to know that we,re on a label that really gets it. With Sony, in the beginning I think they did really get it, but a lot of the people, just like with many major labels, by the time we were done with that record cycle everyone was fired from that label except for one or two people.

How did you leave the label?

We were kind of in limbo, so we said to our label, "We don't want to be on this label anymore, will you just let us go?" We were one of the lucky ones because we were able to just take our record and just walk. So we took "Welcome the Night", what we had recorded so far, and kept recording songs. That's kind of why we took so long, because we were once again just coming into our own of playing together as a seven piece and in the end, by waiting, we were able to write so many more songs that we thought really complimented our record.

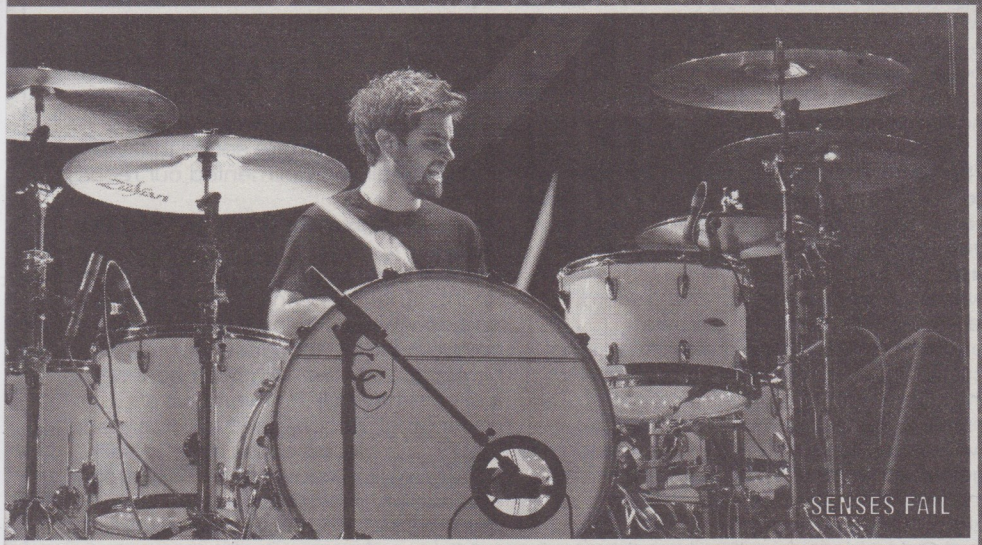
So there's less pressure on the new label?

We feel like we don't have any pressures on this label. We can just be ourselves and do what we want. If we only sold a couple hundred thousand records we,d be completely fine with that because we don't have all the overhead of a major label. People need to understand that on a major label you have to sell about a million copies to actually recoup and actually make money. You can make money from your touring and publishing, if you wrote the songs, but our last record sold like 800,000 copies and we never saw a cent from it. With this album, if we sell a few hundred thousand copies, we are fine, because we are doing this all ourselves.

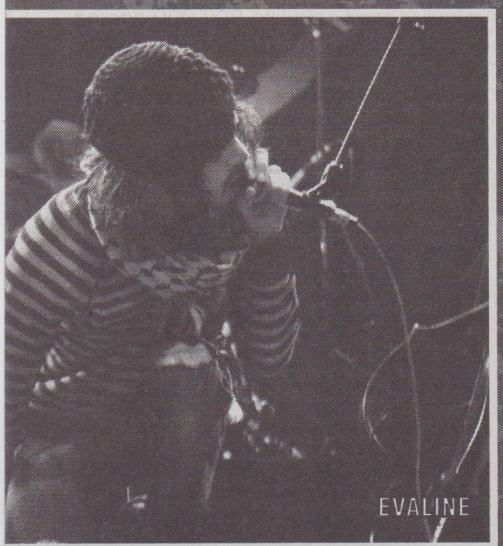


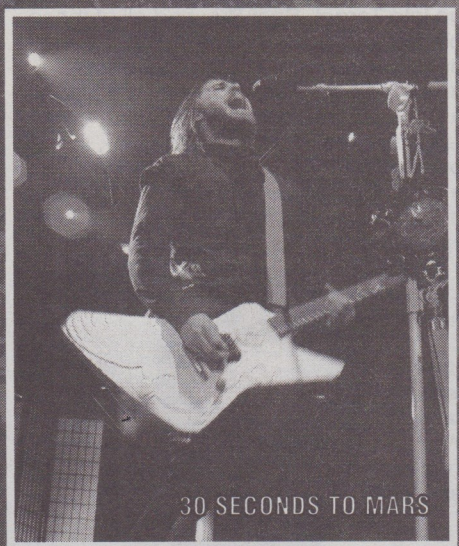
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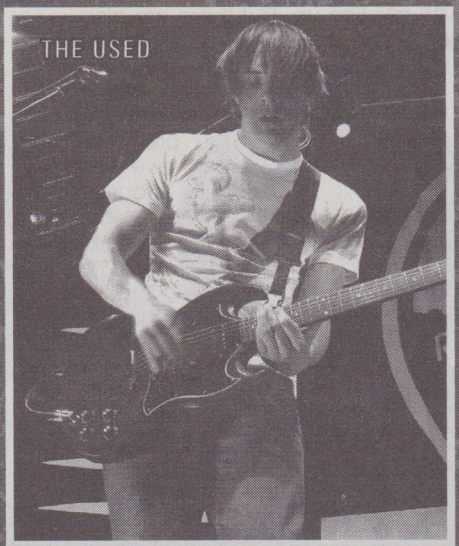
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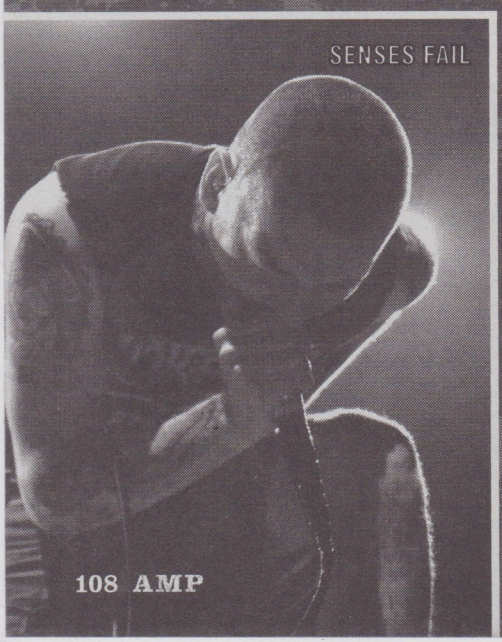

SENSES FAIL




EVALINE

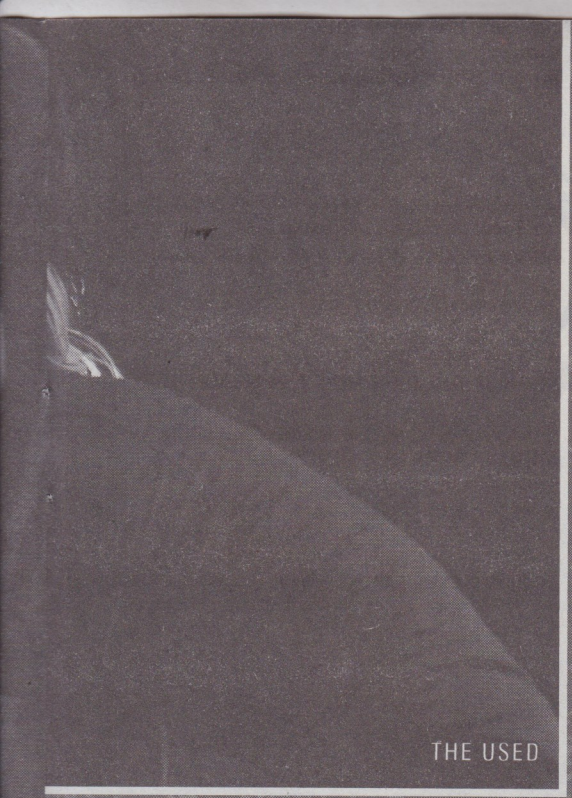

30 SECONDS TO MARS


THE USED

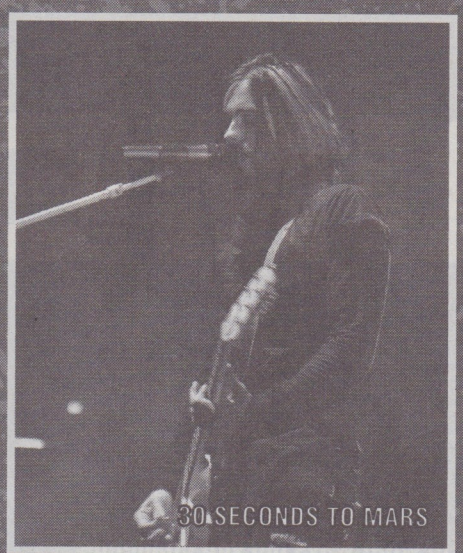

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AIDEN


30 SECONDS TO MARS



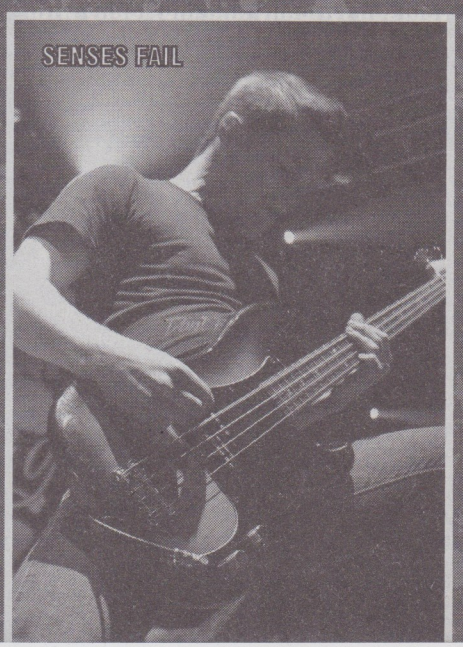
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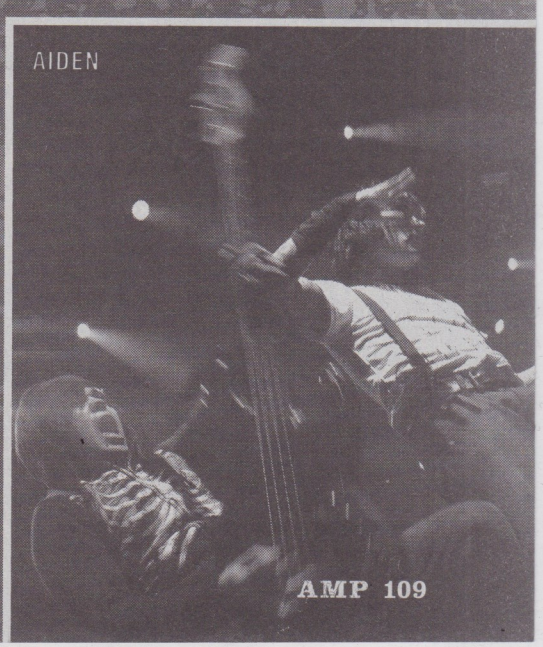
THE USED



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EVALINE



AIDEN



ONLY CRIME!

By Dan Gonyea (www.future-breed.com)

A few years ago, members of different punk rock and hardcore bands got together and formed a "supergroup" known as Only Crime. Fat Wreck Chords released their first album To The Nines in 2004. Three years later, their sophomore release on Fat Wreck has hit the shelves of music stores in America.

Your record Virulence was released by Fat Wreck Chords on January 23rd. How does this record compare to To The Nines? Should fans expect any big differences?

Zach Blair: I really think it's more of a product of us just playing together and writing together, developing a sound WE liked, and not caring who else did.

Aaron Dalbec: I think that Virulence is more of our "own sound" as opposed to our first record. When we started writing To The Nines, we had never played together as a band, so we were still getting used to each others' playing and ideas. Also I think we have grown as a band from the touring we have done since we recorded To The Nines. I also think that Virulence is a lot more "raw" since we did it all live in the studio, all playing at the same time.

Russ Rankin: I hope fans will hear us drastically move away from anything remotely resembling our other bands. To the Nines is a great album, but in places, it's a little derivative - at least to me - of some of our other projects. Like Aaron said, the two years of touring together and exploring our sound is hopefully real evident on Virulence. Fans will be stoked.

Doni Blair: People always say their newest thing is the best, so I'll leave that for Bon Jovi to say. But I'm real happy with both the process and the result. We didn't do the normal "overdub" thing. We did all the music at one time, together, in a small room, and the writing and practicing had been done in that same room, all together. The result is.... Well, you just have to hear it, I suppose. It's Bird of Fire meets Damaged.

In what ways did you challenge yourself lyrically and musically with this new album?

Zach: I really wanted to focus on everything just having a certain impact and taking the time to make sure that every song and every note had that impact.

Aaron: I wanted to make sure that the new record didn't sound like our other bands, and I wanted to make sure we were still progressing.

Bill Stevenson: We were trying to blur some of the distinctions between the more dark sounding songs and the more melodic ones, and to also incorporate some amount of improvisation into what would otherwise probably be viewed as a fairly straight-forward song structure. Expressed in terms of the prior record, we were trying to make "each song" include the most of

the diverse elements of, say, Virus, Real Enemy, and RJR.... The result is that as you listen through the record (do people still call it a record?), there isn't as much of a "Oh... Here's the fast one" ..."Here's the heavy one".... "Here's the melodic one".
Russ: I had to try to write lyrics and vocal melodies over some of the most FUCKED music I have ever heard. It was definitely a learning experience.
Doni: I had to open my ears plenty in the writing process. I had preconceived ideas about what it was I wanted to hear, and honestly that's the first step towards mediocrity. Once I heard what everyone was bringing I just went with it, and by doing that I think it made it more exciting. I had no idea what it was we would end up with. I still don't know what the fuck it is that we ended up with, but it's a hard jam from top to bottom.

How do you approach writing new material in Only Crime? Is there a concrete process, or do you all just meet and talk about something new you tried the other night that sounded good?
Zach: Yeah, it's collective. I have a tendency to take songs in that are at least basically completed and then see what everyone else suggests. Russ always has great lyrics, and we leave that part to him.
Aaron: When I start writing I basically write the skeleton of a song, and leave room for everyone to put their 2 cents in. Sometimes the songs sound very similar to the way I had it in my head and sometimes they are completely different. There is no concrete process to OC when it comes to writing music.
Russ: We usually start with a riff that someone brings in and begin trying to build a song around it.
Bill: There was more "stretching" on this one.... trying to go into areas way outside of our collective comfort zone. This has always been the best way to create something new.
Doni: It was very interesting (and sometimes maddening!) to be involved in the writing process. I wasn't around for much of the writing for To The Nines so to see how everyone did it was educating. We would sit around for the longest time just discussing a four bar passage and attempt it several different ways. I'm used to just going for it and this process was way more in tune with how we've grown as a band. There was a lot more pressure, at least on me, to make a follow up to a really great record.

This is the second album you've recorded at Blasting Room. Do you anticipate recording with the guys over there for even more records?
Zach: I've recorded pretty much every record I've ever been on there. I didn't go to college; I went to the Blasting Room! It's home. Plus, it and its staff are head and shoulders above its peers.
Aaron: I love it there. It's like our home. We go there to write and practice. When we get ready for tour, we meet up there and get everything ready. We love recording there, and it's the most comfortable place for us to record. Never mind the fact that everyone there is amazing, and they do the best job I have ever heard on their records.
Russ: It's a comfortable and functional place for us to do our thing and we can watch "Tribute" and "Glengarry Glen Ross" after a tough day of rehearsals. Plus we know the owner.
Doni: Virulence will make the 7th record I've made at the Blasting Room so it kind of goes beyond the sun for me.

If you could dedicate your new album to anyone in the world, who would it be?
Zach: my brother, Russ, Bill and Aaron.... and Mitch and Murray. [from downtown]
Bill: I would dedicate it to the various musical influences which, without even knowing it, have left their mark on the songs contained therein.
Aaron: It would 100% be for my mom, dad, and grandparents. They have always supported me, and I started playing the guitar at my grandparents' house when I was younger, and they put up with a lot of terrible noise. VERY terrible.
Russ: To all my friends and family and the aging punk rockers who have almost given up on modern rock and roll.
Doni: My wife Shelley, my brother Zach, and Jeff Richards.

Does this new album feel any more personal than To The Nines?
Zach: Totally, we sweat for 10 hours a day in a small room for three weeks straight recording music that we wrote together, with a unified, focused vision. Not taking away from To the Nines, but on this record we just knew each other better. We were a band.
Aaron: Virulence to me is leaps and bounds better. It is totally more personal, and it much more natural feeling.
Russ: Virulence is the album we have been waiting to make since we first started the band: Heavy music with absolutely NO METAL.
Doni: Way more personal because it feels like an album from a band. We had more to prove, at least to ourselves and each other.

What do you do when Only Crime is not currently touring or writing? (such as when a member is touring with another band, like Aaron with Bane)
Zach: I obsess about my house that seems to never get renovated enough, and I cook every day and work out for some OCD reason.
Aaron: I play in Bane, and I also do some web development and work at a book store part time.
Russ: I occasionally play shows with my other band Good Riddance. I produce other bands (most recently the album "Into the Red" by Splitting Seconds released on Lorelei Records). I skateboard, surf, play hockey, and I recently got a job as the California regional scout for the Kootenay Ice hockey team in the WHL.
Bill: Been doing a lot of producing records these days. Not gonna really list bands.... I think anybody that got this far into this interview is probably well aware of all the stuff Jason Livermore and I do at the Blasting Room.
Doni: I have an instrumental band called the Mag Seven that just put out a record with Zach and Bill on it. I train obsessively in Tibetan White Crane kung fu. When I'm not doing those I get paid to ask strangers if they want whip on their mocha.

After your west coast tour with New Mexican Disaster Squad, do you have any plans for touring at all in support of your new full-length?
Aaron: We plan on doing a lot of touring on this record. It is going to be smaller chunks, but we are going to hit it pretty hard.

Have there been any political, social, or otherwise beneficial organizations that you or other members of Only Crime have supported lately?
Russ: We have been featured on peta2's site, and will have an interview online with peta2 Germany soon.
Bill: Other than the obvious "formal" organizations.... I'm still a sucker for the idea that the punk rock community is a family of people who are smart enough and compassionate enough to bring about some positive change here and there, as opposed to just buying a 300 dollar punk rock belt at the mall.

What would you like to tell the youth of America?
Aaron: I guess, just make sure that you do what your heart tells you. You can have a job making $200,000 a year and still be miserable, and on the flip side you can make 200 a week and be the happiest person alive.
Russ: "It is not a world of men" - Ricky Roma ↖

i am the Ocean

...and your city needs swallowing



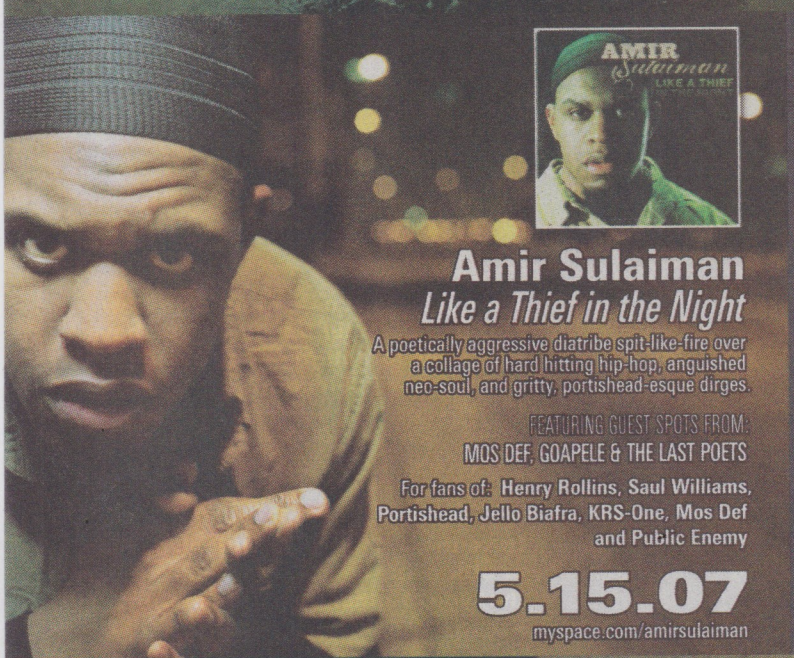
Post hardcore prog rock, ionically fusing sublime melody with chaotic overtures, and heart pounding rhythms.

For fans of: **Deftones, Isis, Coheed and Cambria, Botch and Mastodon.**

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Amir Sulaiman
Like a Thief in the Night

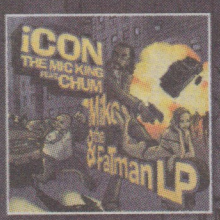
A poetically aggressive diatribe spit-like-fire over a collage of hard hitting hip-hop, anguished neo-soul, and gritty, portishead-esque dirges.

FEATURING GUEST SPOTS FROM:
MOS DEF, GOAPELE & THE LAST POETS

For fans of: **Henry Rollins, Saul Williams, Portishead, Jello Biafra, KRS-One, Mos Def and Public Enemy**

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iCON the Mic King
Mike & the Fatman LP

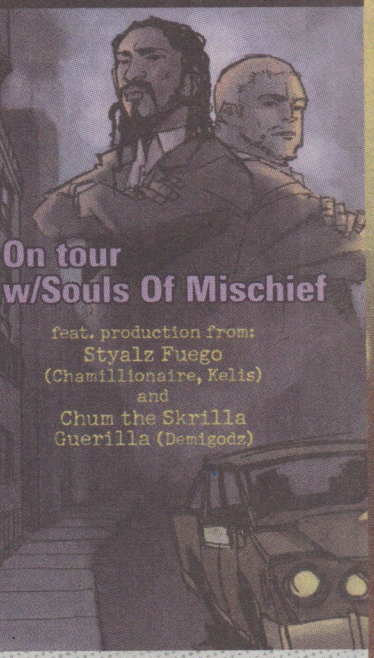
Intelligent yet cryptic lyricism, delivered with rapid fire precision from this ex-battle champ.

FEATURING GUEST SPOTS FROM:
KILLAH PRIEST and BLUE RASBERRY

For fans of: **Pharoahe Monch, Mr. Lif, MF Doom and Wu Tang Clan.**

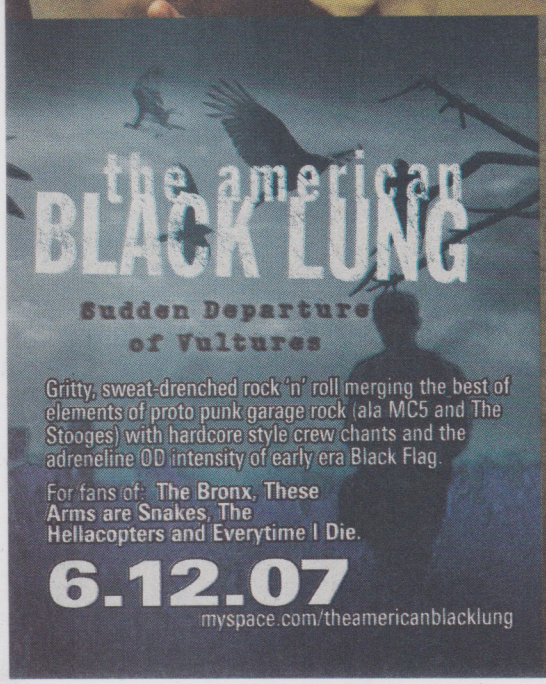
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CAPESIDE RECORDS

PRESENTS



CALL ME LIGHTENING

By John B. Moore / Photography By Andrew Ballantyne

Fueled by cheap beer, dreary Milwaukee weather and, oddly enough, a handful of Dio records, indie rockers Call Me Lightening spent the better part of last year working on "Soft Skeleton", their second full length and first for influential indie label Frenchkiss. The result, much like their debut, is a refreshingly spontaneous. It's a quirky frenzy of power chords and cymbal crashes, which actually owes more to bands like The Minute Men and Modest Mouse than to dinosaur metal bands. In the middle of a recent tour, Nathan Lilley took time recently to discuss the band's beginnings, mid west work ethics and an album inspired by Lungfish and Dio records.

How did the three of you first get together?
We've been friends for a long time - about ten years - and have played together in various bands in the past. We started Call Me Lightning about five years ago.

What's the music scene in Milwaukee like? Are there plenty of places to play?
I think Milwaukee has a really great music scene. There are a few cool bars and clubs to play, along with a constantly changing stable of houses that do cool shows. We're a small city, so the underground is pretty unified out of necessity, which means the music tends to be a bit more diverse than a scene that is big enough to have more genre cliques. I'd say that that Milwaukee's music community is defined more by its lack of pretense and humble work ethic, than by any particular sound. It sounds a little corny, but it's true.

Have all of you been able to quit your day jobs and focus on the band full time now?
We still work when we're home. We stay busy and I feel that we are doing our band "full-time", but that doesn't mean we're making any money.

Let's talk about the new record. How much has the band changed between "The Trouble We're In" and "Soft Skeletons"?
Not a lot. We still write songs the same way in the same tiny room with the same dudes on the same days of the week.

Fair enough. Where you listening to anything in particular that influenced the songs on "Soft Skeletons"?
I started listening to a lot of my Lungfish records again. I realize that nothing on our record really sounds like them, but I definitely feel that they have this kind of regal, anthemic power to all of their stuff that we were going for with this album. I know Bill and Shane got really into Dio in the past couple of years, too. And that's not a joke.

"Soft Skeletons" was put out by a new label for you guys. How did you end up on Frenchkiss?
After we left Revelation, our buddies in Thunderbirds Are Now! put in a good word for us and it kind of just followed from there. We talked a lot with Syd, the owner, and Steve, the label manager, and they came to see us play and we drank some beers and felt everything out. It has turned out to be a really great experience so far and we're really happy.

You guys are about to head down to Austin. Is this your first time playing SXSW?
With this band, yes.

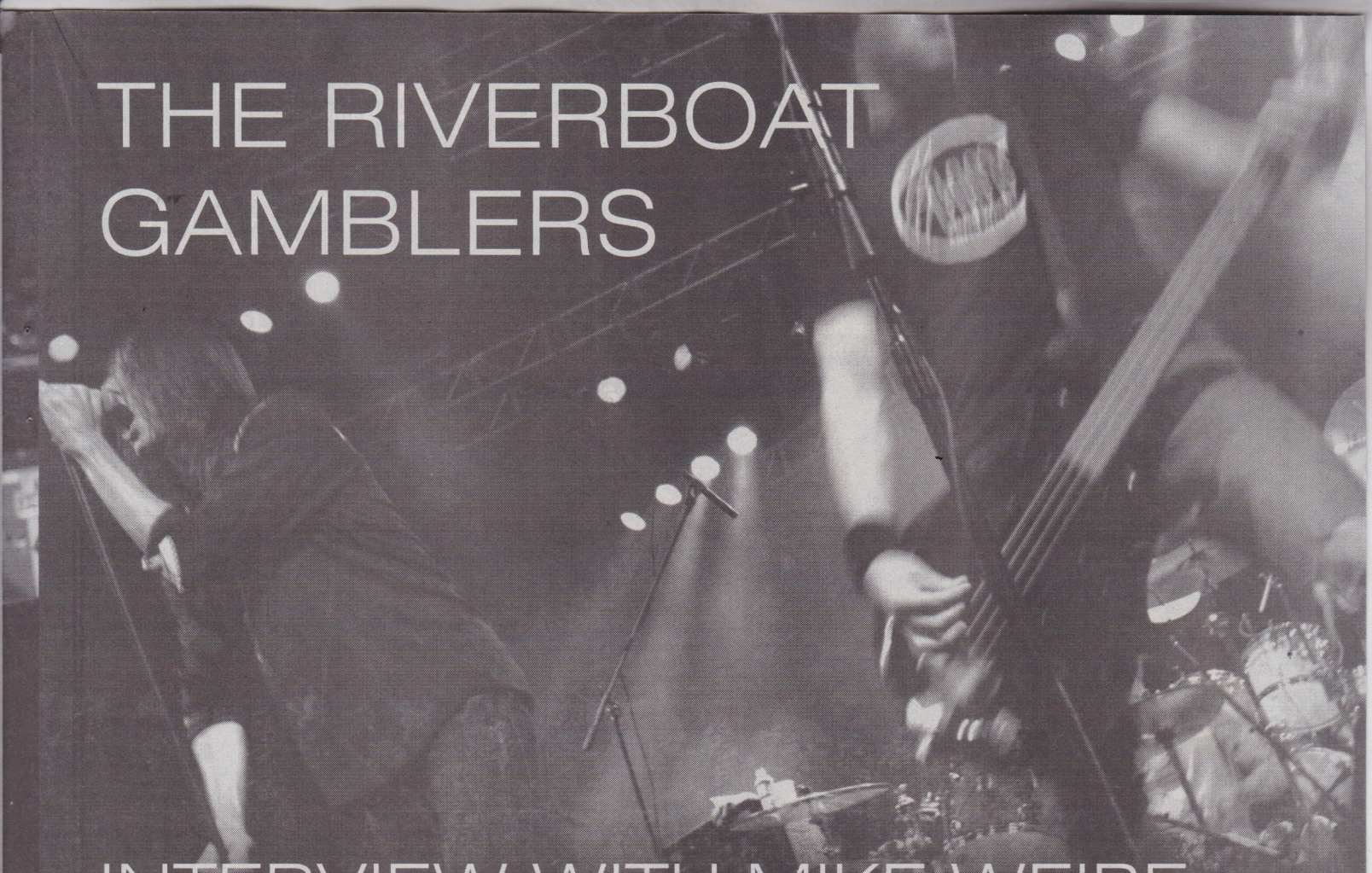
What are your plans now that the record is coming out?
The record came out last week and we're on tour right now. Basically, we're just going to play a lot of shows until we can't stand it anymore and then we'll write another record.

Ok. What's your biggest complaint about music right now?
I feel like the independent music scene is becoming this big, bloated pig that behaves like the mainstream entertainment industry. Independent art and culture is being swallowed up by people that don't give a shit about it and sold back to the community that created it. I think it's turning our minds to mush and I hate the idea of participating in the farce.

Very well put. Do you have advice for bands just starting out?
Don't compromise, don't hesitate. Keep it fucking real.



THE RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS



INTERVIEW WITH MIKE WEIBE

By Donna Ramone

My Dearest Mike Wiebe of the Riverboat Gamblers, since speaking with you, my heart has been all aflutter. I never thought I would ever be clichéd enough to fall for a guy in a band, but I have. The Riverboat Gamblers have shown me what it means to be a good punk band from a year other than 1977. With your catchy hooks and clever songwriting, how could anyone expect to resist? I have been with other band members before, but none like you. I feel like you have catered your music to me- the critical, slightly snobbish asshole- so that you may prove my critiquing ways wrong and show all of us what a good band- nay, a great band- can really be.

Your albums could leave any listener with weak knees. From beginning to end I find myself in awe that an entire album could be good, let alone four entire albums. Your latest, *To The Confusion of Our Enemies*, could be your greatest to date. With all your talent, it's a wonder I never fell for your sooner. Such power! Such energy! Such hair!

And your live shows! Fan me please, before I faint at the glorious thought of them. I swoon when you and your fellow band members take the stage. Not only am I guaranteed a show I will never forget, but I will actually have- dare I speak it- *a good time*! As you gracefully swing your microphone dangerously past yourself, band members and the crowd, alike, I am reminded of the Greek god Ares, the god of war. Your microphone is like your mace of musical justice, as you charge through the crowd, up on tables or cabinets or even out the front door, looking for the Stand-in-the-back-and-talkers or the Drink-my-beer-and-ignore-the-banders, forcing them out of their "too cool to dance" trance and converting them into your loyal followers.

I believe we belong together, forever. I know my shrine built to you is the best. Also, I'm not crazy. Love me now!

Yours truly, forever and ever, whether you like it or not,
Donna Ramone

Are you guys recording at all?
No, not right now. On the last record we had a guy come in, we lost our drummer right before that and we've kinda been playing musical chairs in the drummer position. We're playing with a new guy now, Luke, who played in that hardcore band Gorilla Biscuits, which is



pretty crazy because all of us used to listen to Gorilla Biscuits, and wore Gorilla Biscuits shirts and stuff. It's going really awesome, so hopefully we're gonna do just a little bit of recording when we get back home from the Against Me! tour, like some 7-inch stuff. But we're not going to get into writing new songs yet because we still feel the record is still kinda new.

And how many people out there can call themselves, at some point, a Riverboat Gambler?
What counts? If you played one show with us?

Shit, there are people who only played one show with you guys?
Well, there are people who played like four or five shows. The drumming thing was real transitory, with some saying, "Hey, can I try out for a while and see if it clicks?" and for some people it didn't. We're a really weird level as a band in that we are a full time commitment, where you can't have very much else going on, but you don't really get paid anything at all. So it's at a level right now where you have to give in to being really poor, full time. For now. Initially, there's people who are like, "Yeah, this is great, I'd love to play with you guys!" but in the end there's just not enough money, or we're gone too long, or it's more of a work load then they wanted. But to answer your question, if we're counting people who played one show with us, in all, from the beginning, there's probably eight or nine people out there... [counts off names under his breath] Yeah, I'll say nine.

And does that include everyone in the band now?
No. That's not including anyone in the band now, so specifically it'd be 14. It's very Spinal Tap. The more and more things go on, the more Spinal Tap seems like a regular documentary than a comedy.

Anyone who's seen one knows the insanity of a Riverboat show, but there must have been accidents on the way, right?
There still is. Yeah, there's been a lot. I broke my hand earlier this year, really bad. It had to get pins and stuff in it. Really stupid, I just kinda fell off the stage. Had to get surgery and stuff. They keep sending me these bills and I keep ignoring them, but they keep sending them.

Doesn't your record label cover that?
I keep asking them. I should tell them, "Please send the bills to the record label." I think the bills would get the same treatment I'm giving them. And one time, we were playing in California, in San Francisco, and I was swinging the microphone and I hit our bass player in the mouth. And I knocked out three of his front teeth, but I knocked them up, like way up in the gum line. And he had to get oral surgery, and it was just this huge, huge mess. It ruined our tour, we had to go home. He swallowed all this blood on stage, and it yeah, it was really bad. And that cost a pretty penny but



people really helped out, money wise, which was really cool. Those were our two major ones, but other than that I think several us have been sent to the hospital for stuff like lacerations, or cuts and scrapes. Just things that happen on stage.

Has he forgiven you yet?
Yeah actually, he was really cool about it the whole time, I felt really bad, and I was really, really upset. He just took it like, "Well, that's what happens during the shows." He gave me a concussion once, accidentally, with his bass. I was down on the ground on my knees, and he swung around real quick and clocked me in the head with his bass. I'm ready for this band to be completely accident free. That would be awesome.

Um, I don't know how that can happen unless you stand still.
Yeah, see that's not gonna happen either. I bet there's a medium in there somewhere.

What made you decide to go with Volcom Entertainment as your label versus any of the other traditional punk labels?
They have a really good medium of just being cool people who just want to work hard and stuff. And they give you free socks, what other label will give you socks? The ones I'm wearing right now are actually mismatched because no matter how many pairs of socks you have, you always lose one of each pair in dryers. Is there a name for that? Dryers and washers that eat socks?

I don't know, but there should be.
But it was one of those things, where we listened to anybody that wanted to talk to us. We will never sign to a major, but we didn't want a crappy deal. Volcom wanted to work hard and do a good job and they didn't seem as creepy as a lot of other people, but there were a lot of other indies who were cool.

You guys got music on video games...
Yeah, Tony Hawk and the new Madden game. Which is funny because I didn't know the Super Bowl was happening until it was halfway happening. I have no sports knowledge in any way, shape or form.

So how did you guys get hooked up with that?
I actually have no idea. I wish I could tell people, "Yeah, you do this and this," but I really don't know, other than I got a phone call, "You wanna be on this?" "Sure, yeah, video games? Hell yeah!" I would love to help cool bands get on video games I would be all about it, I should actually find that out. Like a lot of things, I guess you just keep playing, you play a million and two shows and hopefully somebody that works at one of those places will be at one of those shows and like what you're doing, hopefully. And if it didn't happen specifically like that, it's definitely those couple little things are somehow precipitated by playing tons of shows on our part.

And probably not sucking.
Well I hope not. I hope those songs weren't put on games like "This is the part of the game where we want everyone to be really bummed out. Musically, this is the failure level."

So, Against Me! is playing Coachella. Where was your invitation?
I know! Where is that? Must have got lost in the mail. I need to talk to our mailman. We actually said that, this thing with the band, "Yeah, maybe we should have played Coachella." Yeah that would be nice, maybe next year, we'll see what happens. It's definitely on the goal list. Sometimes, things that seem intangible can end up happening, so it's on the goal list. I don't know how to make it happen, but I'll get out my voodoo doll tonight. ↖

ALAN BISBORT

MISTER CREOSOTE WALKS AMONG US

Have you ever seen a photograph of Lee Raymond, the CEO of ExxonMobil? Check him out some time, especially if you don't plan to eat for a few hours, or days. If this loathsome creature didn't exist, Ralph Steadman could have invented him. With his quadruple blubber-waffle gullet, beady eyes, thin criminal lips and barracuda teeth, CEO Raymond could pass for Mr. Creosote, from Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life*. No less an authority on gory cinema than Quentin Tarantino has said that the scene featuring Mr. Creosote is so nauseating that even he found it hard to watch. Here's a link to You Tube, for the unenlightened: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf7PuP2IlN0

Mr. Creosote is a gargantuan fat man who is dining at a fancy French restaurant. The scene opens with the waiter saying, "Ah, good afternoon, sir, and how are we today? Mr. Creosote says, "Better." The waiter asks, "Better?" "Better get a bucket," says Mr. Creosote. "I'm going to throw up." Which he does, frequently, for the next five minutes of the scene. Finally, he simply explodes into a mass of pus, blood, bones and protoplasm after eating a feast worthy of Caligula.

It does appear that the Mr. Lee Raymond was separated at birth from Mr. Creosote. He looks exactly like what he is: A human tic. A bloodsucker. A war profiteer.

So, when you hear that Exxon Mobil's recently posted the largest annual profit ever by a U.S. company (nearly $40 billion), think of Lee Raymond sitting in a fancy French restaurant, with a small army of sycophants hovering around to service his every whim and fancy. That $40 billion means that each American life lost in Iraq was worth about $14 million. As Lee Raymond licks the Bernaise sauce off his Eggs Benedict, he is heard to mutter, "Thanks for sacrificing your kid for me, Mr. and Mrs. Six Pack....uh, waiter, bring another bucket and be quick about it!"

When you take an unnecessary trip in your car, you are putting another piece of filet mignon on the fat man's plate. When you pump that black gold out of ExxonMobil's gaspump, you are transferring your thin resources into Mr. Raymond's already swollen wallet.

But that's not even the saddest thing about having to say any of this, or to point out the obvious about ExxonMobil's record profits. The saddest thing is that there are people—including entire staffs of "think tanks," members of the "media" and red-blooded Americans—who will denounce me as a Communist, or worse.

Here is the obvious: this profit-gouging, like the disparity in annual income of American CEOs vs. workers, is an international disgrace, especially in a "time of war." And, were these more peaceful times, it would merely be an affront to human decency.

Further, ExxonMobil is engaged in an act of chicanery that, if our species survives the coming decades of profound climate change, will rival Hitler's Holocaust and Blackbeard the Pirate's bloody rampages in the anals (sic) of history. That is, hard on the heels of Exxon's record profits was the release by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of a report that paints a grim picture of the damage already done by global warming as well as projects some scarifying future scenarios. The report was written by international experts and is widely regarded as the most comprehensive review yet of climate change science. It is, in other words, as close to infallible as humans can get on a scientific issue. The facts are in, the conclusions are drawn: WE ARE UP SHIT CREEK.

Reports like these have, for decades, been denounced and suppressed by oil companies, with the aid of friends in high office, like the Bush and Cheney families. Now, however, the White House's favorite "think tank," American Enterprise Institute (AEI), has lately been tendering offers of $10,000 to scientists to "undermine" this, the most important climate change report ever released—one that augments what Al Gore (whom Bush Sr. once called "Ozone Man") warns in *An Inconvenient Truth*. I don't know what's more disturbing, that a "think tank" whose hirelings are often cited as "experts" by the mainstream media would toss hush money around or that scientists—toilers in the world of reason—can be bought so cheaply. Hell, if you're going to sell out your species, you ought to go for the platinum.

Need I even add that ExxonMobil is the major underwriter of the AEI? Or that 20 of AEI's staff have been consultants to Bush's White House? Or that Lee Raymond, the CEO of ExxonMobil, who just got a platinum retirement parachute worth zillions, is vice-chairman of AEI's board?

So, when you hear news like Exxon's profit margin, then see photographs of Lee Raymond, you suddenly understand why revolutions occur. Too much wealth and power in too few hands, too many people struggling and suffering. Eventually, a fuse is lit and it's to the barricades!

But how does one go "to the barricades" against Exxon Mobil, or Shell (who also "earned" record profits) or BP or Texaco? Do you simply refuse to use their product? Impossible. Do you only patronize Citgo, Hugo Chavez's state-run brand? This won't make much of a dent in Exxon's profits and certainly not end the burning of fossil fuels, the primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

I don't pretend to have the answers of how to fight this. But, if our species is to survive and create a world worth living in, then each of us has to answer this in our own way.

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Alan Bisbort is author of *"When You Read This, They Will Have Killed Me": The Life and Redemption of Caryl Chessman, Whose Execution Shook of America* (Carroll & Graf).



I AM THE OCEAN

By Brian Peterson

Trends appear and fade in music similarly to the perpetual cycle of the seasons. Every so often, a unique band will take a "spring-like" approach to a genre and inject fresh life within the previously constructed framework, leaving hard-to-please music aficionados breathless. Unfortunately as summer hits its stride the followers jump on the backs of the progenitors and fill up the sweaty evenings with pleasant but predictable facsimiles of the original. Fall then signals the overabundance of clones now aping the formerly fresh sound to the breaking point, with winter providing its ultimate death knell.

But luckily for discriminating music fans, there are groups out there that hunger for originality as much as the biggest critic. For example, the invigorating Utah based five-piece post-hardcore/rock outfit I Am the Ocean proves that culling inspiration from one's artistic heroes doesn't mean a band has to halt at mere imitation. Instead, these multi-talented instrumentalists take everything they know and add layer upon layer of depth and spirit to their work, rapidly pushing themselves down unexplored sonic avenues with each new musical exploration.

Sonically, I Am the Ocean hearkens back to the progressive leanings of Tool and A Perfect Circle mixed with the cascading riffs of Isis and the brutality of Coalesce. But then again don't expect to hear a pale cloning of those genre-defining groups. Comparisons to the aforementioned almost make I Am the Ocean sound like a puzzle-piece type of unit, which they are absolutely not; rather, the group takes their influences, mashes them up, internalizes them and breathes out bountiful, progressive rock opuses that defy categorization.

In the wake of the release of I Am the Ocean's significantly accomplished Uprising Records debut LP, *...And Your City Needs Swallowing*, vocalist Kellen and drummer Taylor pulled up a chair with *AMP* to discuss their influences and more importantly the results they have achieved in the studio. Judging by the captivating sonic spectrums the new record contains, this won't be the last we hear from I Am the Ocean. In fact, be careful as the band just might swallow up your own city, much less the mainstream and underground's clichéd sounds currently masquerading as original, on the next trip through town.

How would you describe I Am the Ocean to someone who has never heard your band?

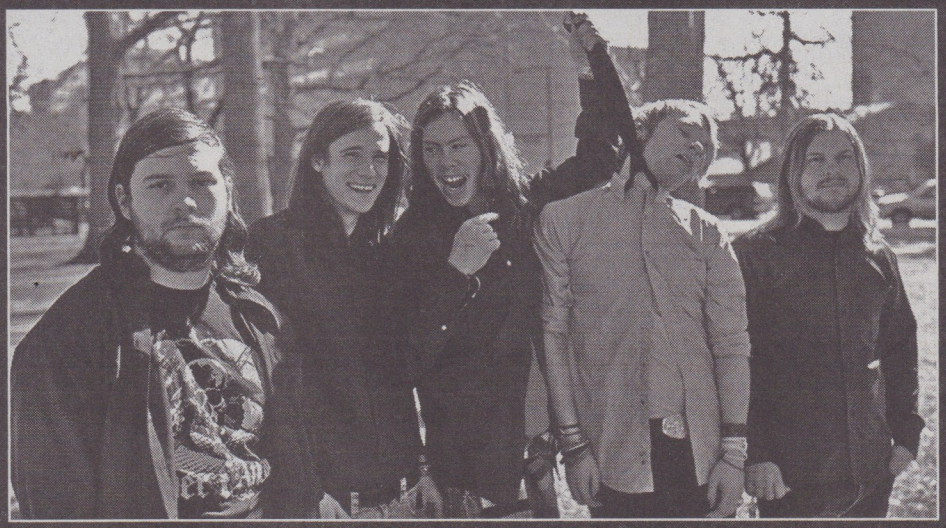
Kellen: I would say that it's pretty heavy rock music, meaning that it's pretty as in beautiful and heavy as in could make you puke, cry and/or shit yourself in the most positive ways. [laughs]

In your opinion, what sets your band apart from other bands out there playing dynamic heavy music?

Taylor: We do the heavy rock and roll stuff, but we try to do it smarter and more intentionally. There is an intentional melody to everything. Even if Kellen is screaming there is a melody; even if it's the heaviest part of the song there is a melody that sticks.

Kellen: It seems like there is also "something else" to the songs we make... something you can't quite pin down.

Taylor: There are a ton of bands coming up these days, and a lot of them are very cookie cutter or maybe fit their genre a little too well. For us it's about writing songs that we like, that we feel good



playing. I guess a lot of different elements find their way in to our sound because we're not consciously trying to be a certain type of band.
Kellen: I feel like we have something to offer just everyone. We're a hard band not to like.

Where would you say the impetus for your music comes from?
Kellen: Well, it comes from everyone's different backgrounds, musically and otherwise. And pretty much anything and everything going on around us and inside of us. We're always trying to learn new angles to incorporate into our music--always pushing the boundary of just what kind of band we are and what style of music we make.

How about your lyrics? What is the motivation behind them?
Kellen: My lyrics are inspired by personal experiences, though they are intended for individual interpretation. Whatever you think the song is about, that's what it's about. But I have my own story. You'll see.

You have a new record coming out. What is the story behind it?
Kellen: It's titled *I Am The Ocean ...And Your City Needs Swallowing*. It's 11 songs that you can rock out to, throw your hair, or drive a 100 miles an hour to, or headphone and not even move, pay attention to every detail and either way have a different but equally thrilling experience.
Taylor: We recorded the record with Kris Crummet in Hillsboro Oregon. That was an amazing experience. It shows on the record. It's really us.

What does that record title mean?
Kellen: It means that eventually we're coming to your city, maybe coming to your living room. We're going to swallow all your asses, or basically we're going to be your new favorite band and your best friends. [laughs] Really, the whole record follows a storyline or better yet a conversation. It starts with a letter, that's partially addressed to the listener. The underlying idea to it all is having or wanting to lose yourself in order to find yourself.

You recently signed with Uprising Records. How is that relationship going?
Taylor: It's great so far. We're excited to be welcomed to a label with solid goals for us and it's self. And we're proud to be label mates with awesome up and coming bands like the American Black Lung, Underminded, My Bitter End... not to mention some great bands from yesterday.

How did you end up hooking up with Uprising?
Kellen: We recorded the record and as it was being mixed we started to send out and shop around a few songs at a time. Initially sending it out we just wanted everyone to hear it, just to know that it was out there and that we were. But we started talking to Sean from Uprising and the interest grew. Then he came out to a show in L.A. when we were on tour and we could all tell right away that he was the type of guy we wanted to be working with.

How is it being a band from Utah? Do you ever feel out of place in the often "coast" dominated music landscape?
Kellen: It's awesome here now. I've been in bands here for almost 10 years. There's always been amazing bands, but it wasn't until lately with this wave of bands coming from Utah, and the growth of "The Broship" that the local shows and scene have reached such a level. There seems to be so much excitement, so much going on.

Are there any other notable bands from Utah?
Kellen: Oh yeah! Bands like Clifton, Gaza, Her Candane, Form of Rocket are reppin' on a national level. And the local scene is constantly pumping out super good bands. We have so many amazing musicians all doing so many things and most of them in multiple bands.

I have to ask, what is the "Broship"?
Taylor: It's a ship full of bros. [laughs]
Kellen: "Broship" is like friendship but bigger. It's a collective of bands and friends, artists of all kinds really, all supporting each other as we take over the world. We're pretty much the biggest bad asses. [laughs]

Obviously your sound reflects a wide range of musical interests. What are some common influences you have between the members of the band?
Kellen: Of course everyone listens to different music. But I guess we can all agree on The Deftones, Cave In, Alice In Chains, Isis, Strung Out, Botch. Good old rock and roll like Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Who, and Queen to name a few.

Influences aside, are there any other interesting facts about your band that newcomers should be aware of?
Kellen: We all have a serious passion for marijuana and movies. We're all very nice. [laughs]
Taylor: We tour with a dog named Chica and a cat named Frankie and Eric our guitar player and Jeremy our bassist are lost brothers who didn't know it. Kellen is a diabetic.
Kellen: Taylor is an acrobat.

What are your upcoming plans?
Kellen: Starting April 8th we're on the "I am Thrilled To Be On Tour, Tour with Thriller." That goes most of April. Our record is out May 15th so it'll just be tour and more tour to support that. We hope to play everywhere, and we're always writing new music.

How has your touring experience been so far?
Taylor: It's awesome! We all really love it and are at our peak when we're out. We all hang out and eat together and play soccer...Arley drives and the rest of us keep him entertained. We take scenic drives when we can. It's extremely positive experience to be traveling and sharing yourself with people on a nightly basis. We're very lucky.

Do you have any favorite places to play?
Kellen: Everywhere! We want to play for and meet everyone. We have a special place in our hearts for small towns and house/garage shows. If you'll let us play at your house or in your town hit us up and we'll be on our way. We really want to be able to play everywhere for everyone. We're going to continue to grow and push ourselves; continue to be the hardest working band.

BANDS AND THEIR VANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH TYLER MATTHEWS OF ME VS. THE MONSTER

Full Name: Tyler Matthews
Band Name: Me Vs. the Monster
Van Name: Chester
Make: Ford
Model: Starcraft
Year: 1991

Does the van have any interesting modifications, i.e. loft, bigger engine, diamond windows, fancy paint? Did you do them? Actually the van used to have a kick ass handicap lift in it, but that only lasted a while. We had to take it out for space reasons. There is also a wall built in so that our gear doesn't fall all over us when we are touring.

Where did you get it? We got the van from my friend's dad who got it from some dead guy with no legs.

How long have you had it? Too long

Where have you taken it (tours)? Up and down the East Coast and as far west as Texas.

How many miles have you put on it? 100,000 at least.

Where do you plan on taking it (up-coming tours)? We have a full national tour that we are doing this May/June, and that's going into Canada as well.

Is there a driver in the band, i.e. the one who is always behind the wheel? Who? Why? Our friend Filthy has put some drive time in on tour. I do the most I think.

Can/do all of you sleep in the van? Yeah, it sucks.

Any interesting sleeping stories you would like to share, i.e. dreams, sex, etc.? We are not that exciting. Sometimes Jason will do a "blow out" which entails putting on the worst music at the worst possible time, and turning the volume up as loud as it will possibly go. Our bass player Adam loves it.

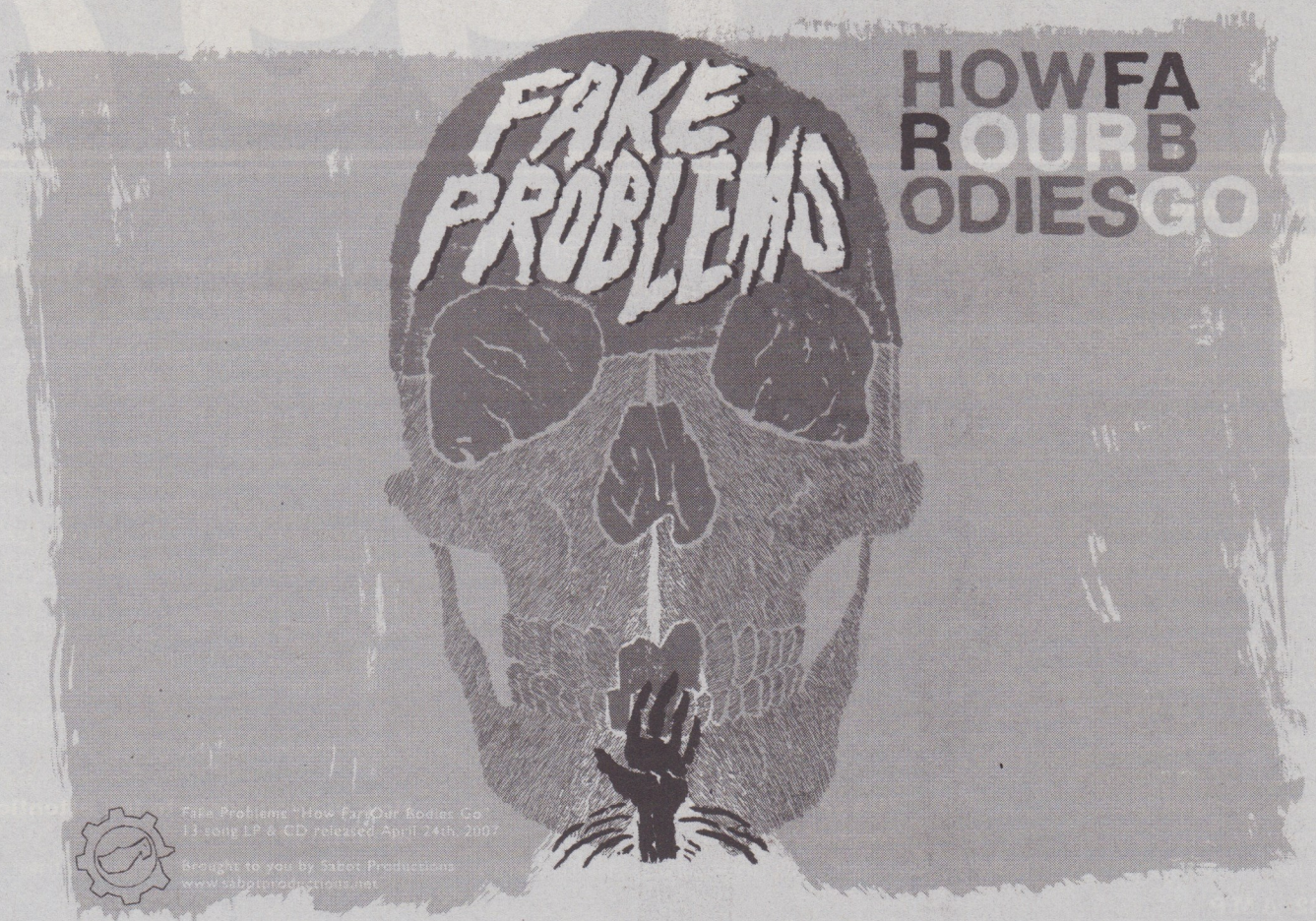
Do you or any one in the band do the maintenance? If so, to what extent? We are lucky enough to have the best maintenance person in the world. His name is Jeff Jones, and he gets us to where we need to go. I think the only reason we are still a band is because Jeff gets us to all the shows. Awesome dude.

Tell me about the worst van related horror story, i.e. fire, accident, hit a deer, etc. Nothing to bad has ever happened. The brakes went out all the way a few times, but other then that nothing to scary has happened.



Does the band have any van rules? If so, what are they? Always drive near the shoulder, because you never know what could happen.

Any advice for those bands who don't have a van and are looking to buy one? Get a real job, and get a nice car.
Tell me about your dream van? The one that drives itself.





1997

By John B. Moore / Photo By Matt Wysocki

Thanks to the recent success of everyone from Fall Out Boy to The Academy Is... Chicago is finally being seen by A&R reps as more than just a layover stop between New York and LA.

Founded out of the ashes of a slew of Midwest metal and pop bands, 1997 sounds little like any of the other bands that currently calls Chicago home. Fronted by Kevin Thomas, the band features guitarist Caleb Pepp, his wife, Kerri Pepp on keyboards, Alan Goffinski on bass and Nick Coleman on drums.

Signed to hometown label Victory Records, a place more known more for post-hardcore and emo bands than harmony-laced rock, 1997 has a refreshingly original sound that will hook many on the first listen.

Still in the studio working on their first full length record, Kevin got on the phone with AMP recently to talk about the Chicago music scene, quitting day jobs and why he can't begin to tell us the origin of the band's name.

Do you have a title yet for the record?

We're still undecided, still thinking about it.

Let's talk a little bit about how the band first got together.

It started actually right after Caleb and Kerri got married. It stated out just as an acoustic project at first. We've all been in bands with each other for the past four years, but this was just another little project we started up. We got together and Nick was about to quit his drums and sell them because he was tired of all of his bands going nowhere and he was getting frustrated, so we almost lost him. But then things just started working for us, and it all clicked at that point. We started practicing and things started working out.

How did you come to the attention of Victory?

A friend of ours actually knew their

"I quit my day job years ago.... We just said, 'Fuck it.' You only have a certain amount of hours in the life you want to live. We know this is what we want to do, so we just went for it. There's no point in a day job if it's just going to interrupt what you want to do."

A&R guy and gave him a demo. He listened to it and gave it to Tony (Brummel, founder of Victory Records). Tony listened and said "Get them in right away".

Did you consider going with any other labels?
We were talking to Fueled By Ramen, but Victory was just fighting for us really hard. And they have amazing distribution.

This is probably the question you'll get asked a lot this year... What's the significance of the name 1997?
I don't know about that one. We tell people a bunch of different stories. I don't know which one I'm going to tell you right now.

Pick one.
(Long pause). I'm not sure.

OK, we'll keep it a mystery then. A lot of your members have come from other bands, playing everything from metal to pop. Does that contribute to the eclectic sound you guys have?
Definitely, definitely. We were all in metal bands. Nick was in a pop band. We are all into The Beetles, Bob Dylan, all that stuff. So all those different sounds just come together and get blended together.

Was there anything in particular you were listening to when you were writing the record that inspired some of the songs?
Mineral. Probably The Promise Ring and The Beatles... Bob Dylan definitely... All of that stuff.... Drive Like Jehu, Sunny Day Real Estate.

Let's talk about the Chicago music scene for a minute. It's obviously been getting a lot of attention lately. Is it a tight scene or is it like LA and New York, where there's just too many bands to create a community?
There's just so much going on. There's just so much going on in the city that you can't help hear all sorts of music here. Everything comes together. There are a lot of cool cats here.

Is it the kind of place where other bands help you out?
Oh yeah. We've made friends with a bunch of bands. We hang out with the Wax On kids - Wax On Radio- they're on Downtown Records. It's nice to be able to talk to other bands.

Are any of the songs from your self-produced EP going to be on the new record?
Yeah. We're changing them around a bit, but all of those songs will be on there.

How different is it to be in a studio, now that you have the backing of a label, rather than recording on your own?
There's a huge difference. The sound that we're getting out of our instruments, the different instruments that we're using, the freedom that we have in the studio to mess around with vocals and harmony. We can really find our sound in here. We pay attention to every little detail. It's definitely a lot of fun being in the studio. And our producer is helping us a lot with our arrangements and just the focus of our songs.

Is the recording process going easier than you thought?
Well, this week is going to be hell. We're just going to be putting down the same parts over and over again. At times, it gets a little bit rough, but it's definitely going to pay off. The songs are becoming more and more incredible.

The album comes out in April, so I assume you'll start touring immediately afterward?
We're probably going to start touring even before the record comes out. We're going down to play the South By Southwest festival. We've never actually been to Texas before, so that will be cool. We're psyched about traveling and being on tour.

So have you been able to quit your day job yet?
Oh, I quit my day job years ago. I think UPS was the last job I had. We've all been broke and pretty much almost homeless some times. Dude, I've been crashing on couches and everything, so I think that's why we can't wait to get on the road. We just said, "Fuck it." You only have a certain amount of hours in the life you want to live. We know this is what we want to do, so we just went for it. There's no point in a day job if it's just going to interrupt what you want to do.

So this has got to be a pretty exciting time for you.
Oh definitely. And this record is going to shine.

What else do you have going on?
We actually have a friend of ours who is a writer and he's going to come out and write a novel based on everything that's going to happen, from recording to whatever happens after that. It's going to be like a fiction folktale, but it will be about us and what's going on. All of the updates we're going to have on our Web site will be excerpts from the book.

Do you know when the book's going to be finished?
It will probably be finished by July, maybe a little bit after. It won't be your normal band update. It will be our story.

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FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND's KRIS COOMBS-ROBERTS

By xAngiex / Photo By Nigel Crane

What inspired the band for this album?
I think the biggest inspiration was having the time to sit and focus on this album. In the past we've done most of the writing while on tour, snatching moments in hotels or the back of the tour bus, but for this album we wanted to take the time out to craft the songs by having the time to let them develop naturally. It allowed us to really think of what we want to do with the album and what we want it to be about.

Also having the 5 of us work so closely with each other on all parts of the songs, not just our individual parts as we have done before, and being very honest about what we like and don't like and then putting the comments to constructive use. It's not always been the easiest process but it's definitely been the most inspiring.

What are some of the biggest differences of this album you're working on in comparison to your others?
I think the biggest difference is that we didn't rush the record so the songs had time to breathe. We've also tried a lot of things that we haven't done before, Matt's playing guitar on some tracks and the overall sound of the record is more mature. It's still very much Funeral For A Friend but the songs are a lot more focused.

Where is the album being recorded?
The album has been recorded in two studios, all the drums, bass, some guitars and some vocals were recorded in Rockfield studios in Wales, as we wanted to record near home because we haven't been able to spend much time here over the last five years. Then the second half has been recorded in Rak studios in London, where we recorded the rest of the guitars and vocals. Rak studios is also where we recorded part of Casually Dressed And Deep In Conversation so it was a comfortable move to familiar surroundings. Especially after being home for such a long period of time.

Who is producing the new music?
We worked with Gil Norton for this record who's previous work we love, so it was very positive working with him. He also brought a lot out of us by showing us how to approach and look at song writing differently, if we couldn't agree on a section of music between us, he would be perfect at coming up with a solution which would make everyone happy, and as a result we have a record that we're all completely happy with.

As a band, are there any new elements, techniques or new sounds that are being experimented with?
As I mentioned early Matt has started playing guitar more, he had played on Hours but he does play more on this record. Also we've toyed around with different instrumentation, we recorded with an orchestra, but haven't used it as would be expected, we've also been experimenting with different percussive ideas and also using instruments which we haven't used a lot in the past so there are definitely a good few experimental elements to this record.

What should fans expect the new material to sound like?
Just big rocking songs, that's been the focus on this record, to get everyone doing what's right for the song. Just great songs to enjoy. Its still Funeral For A Friend but there's a good few surprises on this record, more experimentation and pushing to create something different.

When is the expected release date?
I believe the album release date is going to be May 14 for the UK and some other places but May 15 for America.

Who is doing the artwork?
Mike Hosey is doing the artwork for the record. We had a bunch of pitches sent to us and he seemed to understand what we wanted best so we're pleased with where the direction is heading but it' not finished enough to give details. You'll see soon enough! It looks great and is something different style-wise to what we've used before.

Lastly, what is going to be the new title of the album and why?
The album is going to be titled 'Tales Don't Tell Themselves'. It's very central to the theme of the record, as great tales can only be told if a person goes through an ordeal and survives to tell their story. And that underlines the idea of this record, it's a tale of a persons journey through their worst fears and having to face up to those fears to get back to the life they know. It's an album about hope and never giving up.





THE THERMALS

By Alex Murphy / Photo Courtesy Of Sub Pop

As I speak to The Thermal's Hutch Harris he sits in his home in Portland that is continuously being barraged by snow, and as I imagine trapping him inside, "this is the most snow I've seen in years," he comments. This same day the people of LA saw snow fall, and in Phoenix pipes burst from the cold, leaving many to wonder if this was truly the apocalypse. A theme that fits nicely with The Thermals last "indie punk" album entitled, "The Body, The Blood, The Machine." The album is a ten song attack that examines the affect of religion on the world's affairs, and does so in a very catchy hook full way.

"We didn't sit down and purposely make it a concept. We wrote all the music at once, and then I went to the lyrics and started writing," said Harris on how the theme came about, "when I was half way through writing the lyrics I noticed I was always sitting down writing the same thing. After that I kind of just made a conscious effort to kind of point out something that I was doing already, which was how religion forces politics."

This was a far push away from the band's previous release dealing with more of a grand scheme of things. Giving the album almost a folk feel to it that Harris explains as, "I really wanted to write something that was fictional, because there is so much more places you can do with something when you're making things up. If you just want to sing about the present that's fine, but your limited."

Since the release of "The Body, The Blood, The Machine," last year a lot has changed with the band member wise, and popularity wise. First off in order to help conquer the world with their new album the trio would have to add a fourth member explained Harris. "When Kat [bassist and long time Thermal] and I were making the last record we tried to do minimal overdubs...but with the new one we just wanted to put as many tracks as we wanted until it sounded good to us. When it came time to reform the band obviously we needed another guitar player because of all the overdubs."

Also this past year the Portland scene has hit an all time popular high with bands such The Decemberists, and other bands such as The Shins that now call Portland home. "People have been saying Portland is going to be huge for so long but the thing is it can't blow up like Seattle or Montreal because they have all these bands that are the same style. Portland has all these bands that are doing very well but everyone's doing different stuff. There's really not too many bands that sound like each other so it less of a scene but it is more diverse," Harris could not be more right, and advertisers everywhere are trying to get their hands on songs from any of these bands. In fact it is rumored that the Thermals were offered $50,000 to have one of their songs on a Hummer commercial, however the band turned it down.

With the world now in their hands, The Thermals continued to spread the word of the apocalypse not only here in the U.S. but they would head over seas to Europe. I was not so sure that their songs would fair quite as well in places such as the U.K. and Denmark due to the politics of the album. Harris proved me wrong though, "that might be the best tour we ever had. It was great, we had a bunch of sold out shows. We went to a bunch of new countries we never went there. We were there for a month maybe we had three days off, we just played a ton of show."

The chaos however does not end here as The Thermals will be touring the U.S. again from February until April, and then it is back into the studio. Except this time Harris plans on making a more traditional Thermals record with songs that are, "just some really catchy songs, not really political at all. I just want to make a really fun record that's not too heavy. I still want to keep the records in the same vein as the first record, where it is just more about wordplay. They're not going to be stupid, but not so serious, they'll be intelligent."



LIFE IN YOUR WAY

INTERVIEW WITH JOSHUA KELLAM

By Melissa Wong

Hartford Connecticut's Life in Your Way will released its stellar new album, WAKING GIANTS on March 6 on Solid State Records. With the help of GGGarth and Ben Caplin, the band was able to produce eleven tracks of melodic hardcore fusion, a dynamic follow up to the band's 2005 release, IGNITE AND REBUILD. In their free time, the guys of LIYW like to kick back and play some "frolf" or Frisbee golf- when available, and these days they are getting ready to shoot a video for a single from the new album. LIYW will be touring with August Burns Red during April and May, so check out a live show when the guys swing by your neighborhood. Lead vocalist Joshua Kellam and I discuss matters of importance: progression between albums, the pains of growing up, and keeping true to your roots—whether they be Hardcore, or not.

Life in Your Way is: James Allen, John Gaskill, Jeremy Kellam, Joshua Kellam, and Dave Swanson.

Do you find that the local music scene is supportive being that bands such as Hatebreed, Unearth, Bane and Killswitch Engage are also from the Northeast region?

Oh yeah, the kids here are great. Connecticut can be really hard for bands to get a good response to. They can be picky with what they like. We've been playing shows for over seven years now, I would hope any band being around that long can pull out a good following from their own area. Bands like you've mentioned have helped out the Northeast more than people could know, by giving the future bands of this area people to have at their shows.

"We all grew up going to small, local shows. The fact for us is that a show is a show, no matter how many kids may be there. Hardcore and punk came to us in that very way. It gave people a chance to say what they believe or even let out what they were feeling that very day."

Your mySpace bio says: "Hardcore was once based on the idea that we could all learn from each other, but we need to first admit that we don't know everything." I think that it is probably the most inspirational and sincere thing I've heard in a long time. Tell me more about that...

We all grew up going to small, local shows. The fact for us is that a show is a show, no matter how many kids may be there. Hardcore and punk came to us in that very way. It gave people a chance to say what they believe or even let out what they were feeling that very day. We're not here to acquire money or gain some kind of fame that will put us above others. We're down to earth guys, we love to hang out, talk and learn from each other. That's just who we are.

Your new release, WAKING GIANTS came out on March 6. What was it like working on this album?

We knew there was hard work that needed to be put in for it. The effort was made, and the songs came out great. We took a long time in the practice space. We got to do a great European tour in Dec. 2005, and when we got back, we basically spent ten months with little touring to write for WAKING GIANTS. There were some hard times in there. A few riffs and songs that got scratched but it came together, and we had a great time in the studio. We were able to try absolutely any ideas from the smallest, miniscule change to a whole half of a song being reworked.

Between WAKING GIANTS and your last release, IGNITE AND REBUILD on Indianola Records, what kind changes did the band endure?

Well a good progression, if it wasn't, then most likely we would have called it quits. IGNITE AND REBUILD was a big deal for us. The band has been through a few member changes to say the least, and that was the first CD we got to push after and be confident that we were staying on course for another. Although we stood by it and still do, the fact about it is that us five guys hadn't been together too long. So, everything that comes along with that was right there like still learning how to work with one another, finding our capabilities, and even getting to know each other on a personal level. We also had the "rush" that a lot of bands have in the studio. Not enough time, money and patience for a perfect record. Taking away all of those things was a huge blessing in working on and recording WAKING GIANTS. We've grown up, well, maybe a few of us. For this record we had time, a great studio experience, and growth in the right music for us. Any person should be able to notice progression between albums, but maybe not too much for someone new to hardcore. We feel it's more catchy and progressive.

What has been the most challenging part of being in LIYW?

Pushing through the hard times. When you get out on tour and you've got a whole week of shows that don't go well, it can be a real let down. Leaving loved ones, missing weddings and such important events that most people would do anything for, can be hard. It's stressful, putting all of us in moods where it can be hard to get along. That is something all bands have and need to work through.

In the press release it mentions the explanation behind the album title. When you say, "we all have giants inside that can and were made to do great things..." What specifically did you mean when you said that we all tend to "put them to sleep?"

It's so easy not to strive in life. More often than not we just get by in life. Not acknowledging our faults is like, I think, going backwards. We can do great things and have people look up to us. Just the simple fact that the world around us is in a brutal state and having any means to be a "world changer" is what I mean. We're a pretty positive band but we don't just keep our thoughts in the music scene in which we play. We see the need around the U.S. and elsewhere. We can all do great, huge things. We've just got to wake up sometimes.

That's very true, and very humbling to think about. For fans and those new to LIYW music, what does LIYW's 2007 calendar look like?

We've got Cornerstone lined up and a festival in New Hampshire called The Soul Fest in August. We hope to play Cornerstone Florida but we'll see about that. We should be doing a video for a song off of WAKING GIANTS soon. It may take some time cause we're all so picky about videos.

Thanks Joshua for doing the interview! For Life in Your Way tour dates and to check out Joshua's favorite tracks from the new album, "The Beauty of Grace" and "Beneath It All", please visit: www.lifeinyourway.com, and www.myspace.com/lifeinyourway.



ONE DEAD THREE WOUNDED

INTERVIEW WITH TIM

By Alex Frazier

First off, who are you and what do you do?
I'm Tim and I sing for the band.

Who else is in the band and what do they do?
There's Jim Fox and Jay Wilmot on guitars. John Lowe plays bass and Andrew Torre plays the drums.

Secondly for the people that aren't familiar with your band please give us a brief history of ODTW...
I guess I can say the band around 2000 when we released our first demo. We started playing together about a year before that. We played a lot locally and released a few more demos until 2004 when we released our first record, Paint the Town, on LoveLost Records. We toured on it a bunch but ran out of money and had to go back home and get jobs. So we started writing another record, which became Moving Units. That record was recorded at the end of 2005 and was released in July 2006. I guess that's the short version.

You have a pretty unique band name. There are quite a few bands out there with the word "dead" in them, but none of them specify the amount of even make mention of the wounded. How did the name come about?
There's really no great story to this. I saw a news report on TV that said 'ONE DEAD, THREE WOUNDED'. At the time we were a four piece so the math worked out. I thought it was something different. I guess that's what happens when you name band when you're 17.

Now that the "outsiders" have the skinny on your band, lets talk about shows - I've seen your band twice once in a church and once in a VFW. Both times you guys have been a really solid and live band...the PA gear hasn't been pro grade each time, and somehow you guys still manage to sound better than anyone else. How does this work?
I don't know if we sound better than anyone else but I've always felt we've been a live band. It's hard to record and capture the intensity of a show. We just always try to give it everything when we play, even if there's only a few kids there. I guess that sincerity shines through a nice sound system.

Any favorite towns to play? Favorite shows to mention?
Yeah, there are countless towns all over the country that I can't wait to get back to. Philly, of course. Johnstown, PA, Cleveland, Albany, NY. The list just grows the more we tour and the more friends we make on the road.

I know you guys are on the road quite a bit - any favorite places to eat on the road?
Jay and Jim are real big on Arbys. When we're in western PA Sheetz is king. There's always a lot of Taco Bell runs where ever we are.

Final road question (maybe). What kind of van / tour bus / limo do you guys roll in? Any special modifications like turbo, bunk beds, dual exhaust, 22's?
Ha ha, Not really. We're pretty basic. We have a ford 15 passenger van, we took out the bench and put a few pads on the floor to sleep on. Nothing extravagant really. Just gets us from show to show.

You guys are from Philly, how many cheesesteaks do you consume on average weekly?





I'm actually a vegetarian but there's a great vegetarian cheese steak place I frequent pretty often. Jim's a pretty fat dude, I'm sure he eats at least 12 a week.

Speaking of Philly – how's the "scene" down there, is it good coming home after a tour anyone we should be on the look out for?
Philly's a pretty rough town to play for a lot of bands. I mean we're from here and it took years for anyone to pay attention to us. I always feel like hardcore kids here are pretty quick to spot a fraud and a lot of bands are, well, fake. But there's a great scene here with all kinds of different music. I'd be on the look out for Passion, The Divining, Zolof The Rock And Roll Destroyer, The Twilight Collective and Jena Berlin. There's tons of other band as well.

Phillies, Flyers, Sixers or Eagles?
I'm an Eagles guys myself, but I know Jay and Jim are real big on the Flyers.

Now, Moving Units came out recently, really great album - What would you say are the differences between Moving Units and Paint the Town (also a great album)?
Moving Units was the first album we wrote with the intent to write an album. Paint the town was more or less the songs we've written the year or two before it came out. It just came to the point where we had enough songs to put on an album. We spent a full year writing the songs for Moving Units. It was really a weird time for us. All of us we're either working or going to school or both and on top of that we're getting together to write every night. I just remember feeling exhausted during the process. On top of that we had a handful of labels looking at us that didn't really seem to care all that much. All of them just seemed much more concerned with the bottom line. Something completely new to us. I never even heard the word soundscan until that time. I guess that's why the lyrics came out the way they did. Pure frustration with the way things were.

When I listen to One Dead Three Wounded - I can hear these "classic" rock influences in some songs - care to elaborate on who are some of your favorite that would be considered classic rock?
There's definitely a classic rock influence. Jim has said to me at times that he wishes he was in a classic rock band. I never saw someone get so excited when Kansas or Boston is on. Jay's the same way, he knows the words to every classic rock song. We actually have opened our set with a riff from Carry on my wayward son. Although the lines around what's considered to be "classic rock" tend to be a bit blurry, we came to agreement on these bands: Steve Miller Band, Led Zepplin, The Beatles, Kansas, Paul Simon, The Beach Boys, CCR, Eric Clapton, Queen, Pink Floyd and Sabbath.

What are your favorite songs on the new record, anything stand out to your or mean something more than the others?
I think my favorite songs on the record are Planning Obsolescence, Black Holes, and We're Broke Til Payday. Planning for the riffs, Black Holes for the structure and We're Broke because the lyrics are some of my favorite that I've written.

Walking through my local record store the other day I gave the ODTW records a look, I noticed you re-released Paint the Town the graphics are completely different (no offense or anything but serious upgrade guys)! Do you feel that imagery/graphics is important for a record?
Yeah. There's really no reason for anyone to buy your record anymore unless they're completely stoked on the artwork. They can just download for free or buy it from Itunes and put it on their Ipod if the artwork isn't special. I think it's the deciding factor on whether someone will buy it or not. I know it has been for me at times.

How many designs were proposed for Moving Units and what made you go with the final product?
I think there might have been 3 or 4 designs proposed. We wrote a pretty dark and cynical record and I feel like the artwork is married to that concept. It's dreary and almost looks apocalyptic. The other designs didn't portray that vibe as well. Our buddy Todd Steponick did an awesome job on it. He hasn't done much with other Hardcore and Metal bands and we thought that was cool because we don't want our records to look like every other record coming out in our genre.

Finally it's 2007, what's on the horizon for 1d3w?
We just started writing new songs for our next record. We hope to finish writing our record while staying busy with touring. Hopefully a balanced diet of the two.

Any "shout outs"? Last words?
Thanks for the interview and all the kind words. Can't tell you how much we appreciate it.

Resurrection Section

Legends At Large, Radical Reissues & Killer Compilations by Jim Kaz

Cobra – not your average hair band

It's funny how things change. Just this morning on a local alternative-rock station I heard one of the highly coveted, new Guns N' Roses tracks that was leaked on the Internet. The DJ and his morning-show goons were licking their chops in anticipation. A few years back I recall this very same station poking fun at rock bands such as GN'R and Mötley Crüe, tagging them as passé and un-cool. By the mid '90s, the term "hair metal" was a derisive one describing goofy, air-headed pop-metal bands of the prior few years. (Although, the two aforementioned bands don't in fact meet all of the criteria of hair-metal membership.) MTV's *Beavis & Butthead* helped cement the backlash as the characters ripped pop-metal bands left and right, while rocking out to new-school grunge acts. The old school was now chastised by the mainstream for being sexist, shallow and unenlightened during this new era of political correctness, where bands like Pearl Jam and Nirvana reigned supreme. But in hindsight, pigeonholing pop metal is not so simple. Like any other movement it had different variations and facets that were hardly unified or cohesive. In spite of its reputation, there were good bands in the scene, and if you want to get technical, a high level of musicianship.



Cobra

At first glance, **Cobra** may look like your run-of-the-mill '80s pop-metal band, but these cats were different. First off, the band's sole offering **First Strike** was released just when pop metal started to surface, and still a few years before "hair metal" became a widespread term. Then there were the superior songs, ranging from rousing hard-rock anthems to bluesy bar-burners, and shades of classic British metal. Not much info is available on the origins of this short-lived band, but its album lives on in the annals of melodic rock and has a cult following to this day. I first found this record at my high school's radio station. This stoner kid I knew had his own radio show after school and I would stop by often to spin an eclectic range of stuff like Iron Maiden, the Ramones and Cheap Trick. I had seen *First Strike* on vinyl stashed in a closet and asked what the hell it was. I found out it had been sitting there for years and featured a quasi-hit "Blood On Your Money." I was piqued; that was good enough reason for me to snag it. At first, I was not smitten, although I appreciated the band's obvious knack for well-crafted songs. For a few years I let the album sit and gather dust. But, when I went through my unfortunate record-purging phase during the late '90s, something told me to hang on to it. I'm glad I did.

Cobra will probably be best known for what its members achieved after its demise, than the album it created during its short lifespan. The band was formed in 1982 in Memphis, Tennessee by vocalist Jimi Jamison and Canadian guitarist Mandy Meyer. Jamison had previously been signed with pop-rock band Target, while Meyer had been a member of Swiss metallers Krokus. Jamison had a deep-soulful voice, and for what he lacked in macho rock-star image, he made up for with his extraordinary range. Meyer was a virtuoso guitarist not a million miles away from Eddie Van Halen in style.



Bassist Tommy Keiser, drummer Jeff Klaven and guitarist Jack Holder—who had previously been a member of infamous Southern rockers Black Oak Arkansas—rounded out the band. Since Jamison and Meyer had prior connections it's logical to assume Cobra was a project assembled around the pair before both went on to bigger things (Jamison would join radio rockers Survivor and Meyer would join super group Asia). Once solidified, the band hooked up with high-powered manager Butch Stone, was quickly signed to Epic/CBS, and put in the studio with Judas Priest producer Tom Allom, who had just scored some major hits with that band. *First Strike* was soon released in 1983.


Cobra


Mandy Meyer

The album opens with the single "Blood On your Money," an upbeat rocker not unlike other pop-metal sounds of the day. The difference is in Jamison's voice. The man's powerhouse delivery and melodic overtones take the song far out the ordinary. However basic the chain-gang chorus may be, it affixes itself in your memory, lasting long after it's over. A rather hokey video was produced for the song, but was seldom shown on these shores. "Only You Can Rock Me" (not the UFO song by the same title), keeps the pace with its vintage-sounding metal riffs and driving beats. "Travelin' Man" is where things get different. This blues-infused number came years before the style got trendy, and is put across with ballsy authenticity. Only a handful of other bands at the time were openly referencing blues-rock on a regular basis (Whitesnake and Fastway.). "I've Been A Fool Before" is a somber slow song in the Foreigner vein, and while its cheesy keyboard bits sound dated, the vocals and main hook are not without their merits. The title track is one of the album's shining moments. Opening with an infectious Western-flavored guitar riff, the song slithers along an upbeat tempo, augmented by forceful guitars and a punchy chorus, making it one of the finest pop-metal songs of the era. "Danger Zone" is AC/DC-lite with a muted opening riff that gradually builds into a full-scale hard-rock assault. Although the chorus is nothing special, Meyer's scorching melodic solo elevates the song to higher levels. "Looking At You" is a stunning ballad with a textural acoustic foundation enhanced by warm organ tones. Jamison's sweeping chorus soars high, helping to further distinguish it from the typical '80s power ballad. More treats can be found in "Fallen Angel" and "Thorn In Your Flesh." While neither reinvents the wheel, both are first-class hard-rock numbers with excellent vocals, blazing guitars and distinctive style.

Although Cobra would go on to tour with the likes of Quiet Riot and Nazareth, album sales stalled, and the band became embroiled in contractual and legal problems. The band broke up when Jamison left to join Survivor who were riding high after their huge hit "Eye Of The Tiger," while Meyer was offered the guitar spot in Asia. Keiser and Klaven would go on to join Krokus. *First Strike* is not a particularly innovative album or that important in the context of the scene. But it features a clutch of well-written numbers and stands out, as one of the best the genre has to offer. And in Europe, the album is legendary, with melodic rock and AOR (Adult-oriented rock) sites continually singing its praises. Finding it on CD is next to impossible as Sony only issued it in Germany for a short period during the early '90s. Bootlegs do exist, and are all over the Web these days. But, I do see the vinyl version quite frequently in the $1 bins at used record stores, and for that, it's a steal. Either way, *First Strike* is an overlooked gem that deserves its due. For questions, comments or something you'd like to see, drop me a line at Retrohead77@yahoo.com. Cheers, JK.

LITTLE WHITE LIES WITH LOVEHATEHERO

INTERVIEW WITH PIERRICK BERUBE

By Andrew Wilson / Photo By Quang Lee

LoveHateHero's new album, White Lies, is a combination of pop, rock, metal and hardcore; spanning each genre for a heavy eclectic sound with experimental melodies and arena-rock-ready choruses.

Although the last two years of touring have taken their toll on the band, seeing 3 members depart, the band is tighter than ever with young guns Myke Russell and Kevin Gruft on guitar, giving a metal-riff flavor that play well with Pierrick's vocals & Myke's harmonies.

Pierrick Berube, vocalist for LoveHateHero, is out on the road in Seattle before a break back home in the Los Angeles, CA area. We talk about the new album, the tour before the album, and how this album came together.

Tell me about the new album, White Lies?
It's fucking awesome! I guess you could call it "pop-metal"; it's got really intense guitars. I don't know what you would compare it to; I guess Underoath, but with more melodic singing.

Different way you did the songwriting to this album?
We wrote this album after being on tour for 2 years. We knew what we wanted to be playing live so we focused on writing songs for that. We didn't have the touring experience before of knowing what to write to translate to a live show.

Do you write while you're on the road or in the studio?
No, we don't write in a studio; we locked ourselves away in a house for a month, all five of us. We maybe wrote two songs on the road, but it's tough to get it going when you're on the road.

Does everyone contribute with songwriting?
Someone will come up with a guitar riff, or bass line, or whatever, and we'll just go from there; we'll just go through it until we've got the song. Demo it out on the computer and edit from there.

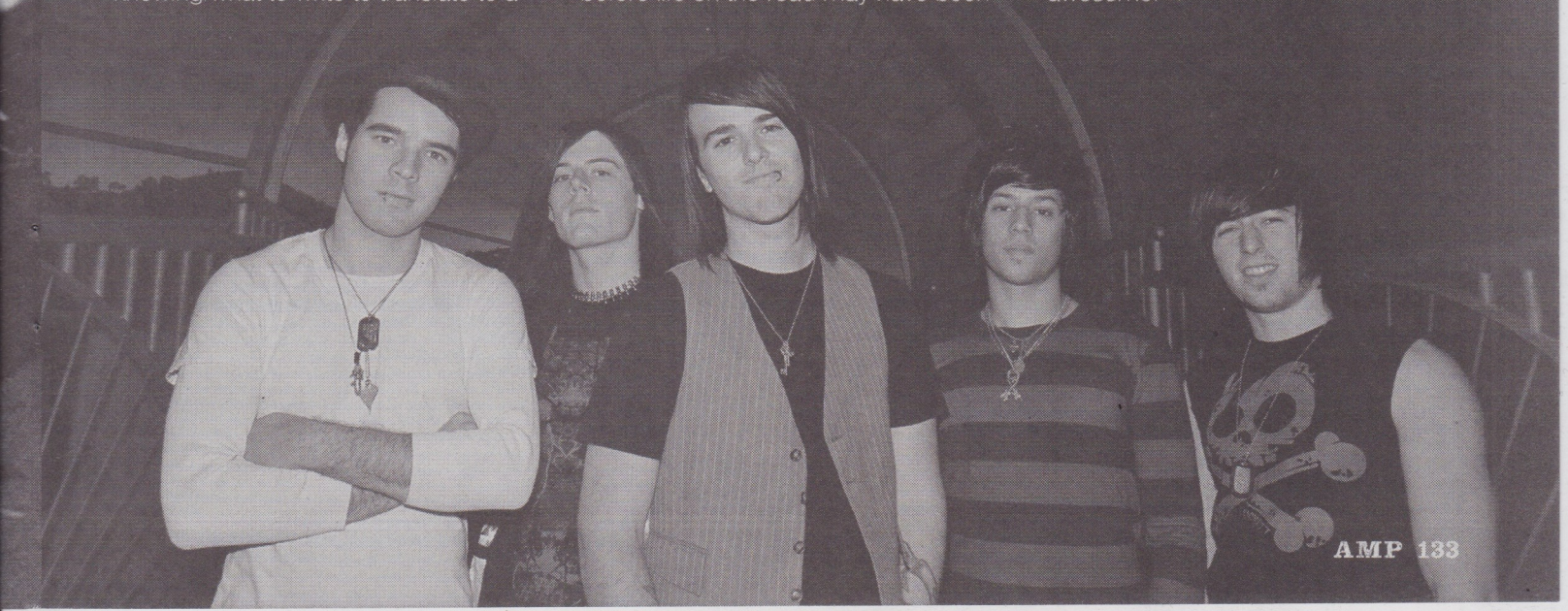
I understand the songs are more about life experiences and are more personal this time around.
Yeah, since we've been on the road for about two years straight, that's what we drew from.

What do you attribute to some band members leaving toward the last leg of your tour?
I think since none of us had ever toured before life on the road may have been too strenuous on some of the former band members. They weren't having as much fun and it's hard living on 5 bucks a day. Their departures were a slow progression; they didn't all leave at once.

I heard on the album your range in vocal pitch is higher on some songs than on the last album.
Myke Russell, our guitarist, has this really high Copeland, Save The Day type of voice, so we used his voice a lot to add to the harmony.

Was your focus on having a more melodic sound rather than a "hardcore-growl"?
When we were writing the record we wanted to bring our music to a broader audience and I think keeping it strictly hardcore we wouldn't be able to do that. We wanted to bring on more vocals, more harmony for a different sound rather than only hardcore.

Is that a conscious decision? I mean, I know every artist wants to bring their music to more people, but was it a conscious decision to change it up or just where the band was going with their sound?
We sat down, and before we wrote the record, we wanted to be considered well respected as musicians, as well as great songwriters, and wanted to write where young and old could enjoy our musicianship and songwriting, and respect it. We weren't looking to write the 4-chord-pop music or sound, we were trying to be different; something more technical and we think it came out awesome!



THE ACADEMY IS...

By Melissa Sharpe / Photography By Jessica Chow

Chicago's The Academy Is... are poised to release a follow-up to their triumphant 2005 Fueled By Ramen debut, *Almost Here*. The new album, *S.A.N.T.I.*, while the product of a relatively quick but careful process, came into being amongst many changes including a frenzy of touring, a split with a guitarist and a hush-hush label cooperation between Fueled By Ramen and Atlantic Records.

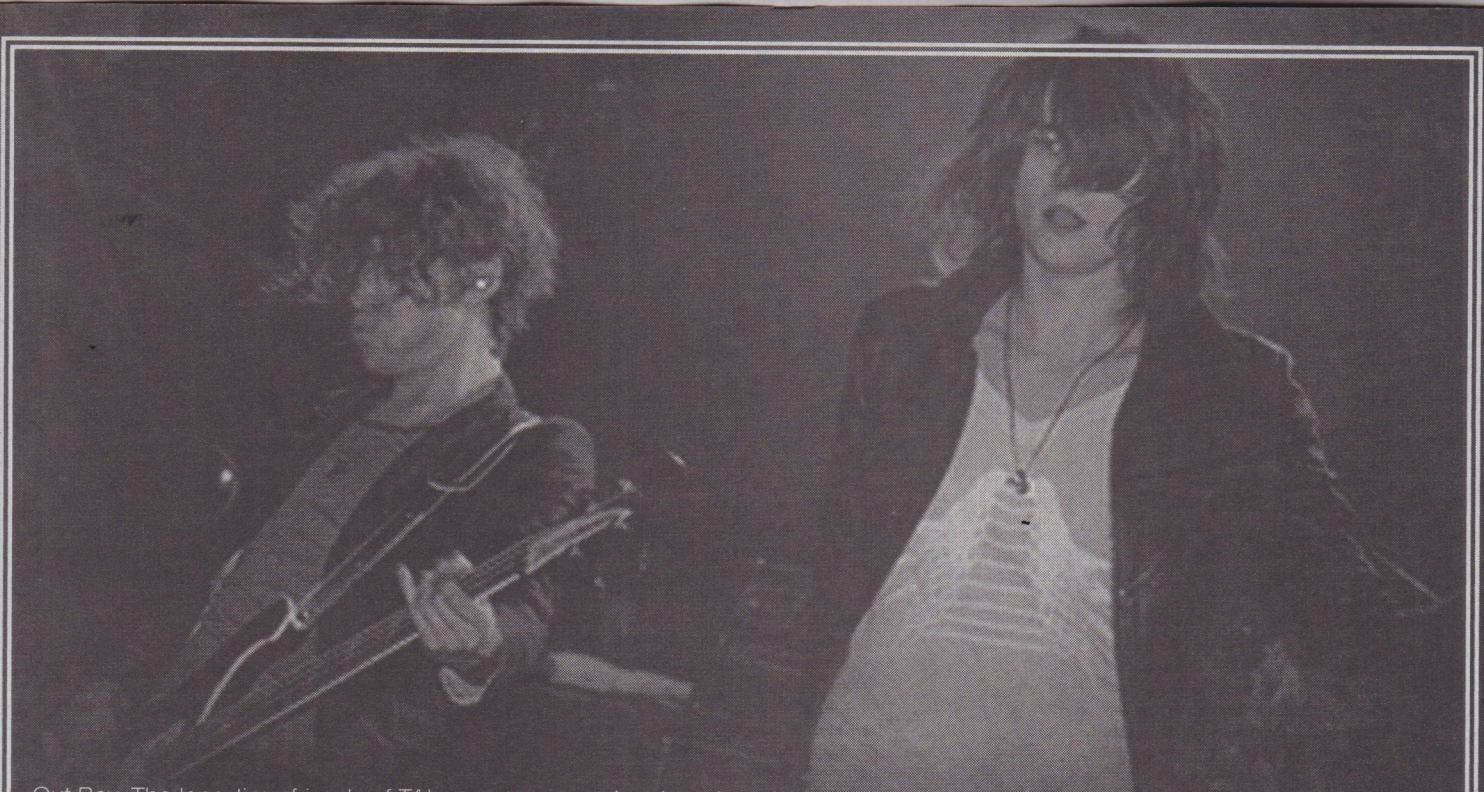
Guitarist Mike Carden explains that *S.A.N.T.I.* is in part a culmination of post-tour reflection. "We ended up doing Warped Tour, which definitely is a draining tour on many levels. Now, looking back on it, I have a bit of a different view. That was a great tour that we needed to do and we grew a lot and figured out a lot about the band. It was just another part of growing up," says Carden. After The Academy Is... returned to their Chicago suburb, the writing process began. But all that touring did more than provide the band with inspiration, the exposure allowed them to work with the people that they "dreamed of working with". Carden is talking about recording artist / producer, Butch Walker. "We love the work he's done from an artist's standpoint... the fact that we got to experience (working with Walker) made it about that experience. That's just as important as the song writing phase, how you record it." Where *Almost Here* was primarily created by Carden and singer William Beckett, *S.A.N.T.I.* was pulled from bits collected by the entire band. "We had all these ideas," Carden explains. "Blurbs, verse, chorus, little musical ideas. A big pile of them." The bits were kept track of in Apple's Garage Band software until they could be patched together. "You have a stockpile of things that you've been working on for two years and you start thinking through it... seeing what you are still drawn to and what you are not so much. It's pretty natural, we don't have some kind of formula that we put up on a chalkboard." Carden says the band still references back to old demos to find material to rework.

The Academy Is... has gone through some changes since those demos, however. Most recently, their split from guitarist Tom Conrad. The band has had little say about the fissure, but Conrad spoke out on his website (www.forevernever.com) saying: " I apologize. I would have said something sooner but it was not the right time nor was this the right place to do it and honestly, it still isn't. There's not much to say with what happened besides I dont (sic) want people thinking I quit the band." Three months later, on February 26, 2007, Conrad updated again explaining that "after two long days in the south side of Chicago, its (sic) starting to take form. I started playing again with three others and there is definitely chemistry."

Another major change includes a partnership between labels Fueled By Ramen and Atlantic Records. While The Academy Is... claims full Fueled By Ramen pride, Atlantic Records has paired the band with their own artists for tours and handles TAI publicity. Details are hard to come by with Carden commenting: "Yeah, so deals have been made. I don't know how much I can, I don't know... I guess Fueled By Ramen has deals with a lot of records. It's kind of out of our control. It's fine. It doesn't really make any difference to be honest with you." He continues to explain that when TAI was younger, all they cared about was working with a "cool" label and touring around. Little did they know that their hometown friends would start selling out clubs, then arenas, to suddenly become forces in the world of music.

He is, of course, referencing Fall





Out Boy. The long-time friends of TAI are headlining a major summer tour sponsored by Honda. Yup, the car company. Carden and the band are stunned by the sudden hugeness themselves and slightly confused about the negative reaction some people had. "I know a lot of people are like 'so now you're on tour with Fall Out Boy?' We grew up together. We played VFW halls way back when and we've done other tours with them," Carden says before pausing for a little introspection. "The fucking band blew up! What can I say, it's great. And the fact is, Pete (Wentz, of Fall Out Boy) called us like 'we can go out and play stadiums and it won't be like old times but it's going to be cool. You in?'" And the rest will surely be history.

That's not to suggest that Fall Out Boy will carry the claim of breaking-out and popularizing The Academy Is... Even the earliest receptions of *Almost Here* were gushing with praise and the album / touring effort landed the band coverage in Spin, Rolling Stone, Blender, Alternative Press and even Teen People. Other bands paid attention as well, and the next thing TAI knew they were touring non-stop with bands like Motion City Soundtrack and Something Corporate as well as on the iconic Van's Warped Tour. The success happened organically. "There weren't videos, it wasn't radio, it wasn't any of that," says Carden of TAI's grassroots rise to semi-fame.

Getting noticed by the mainstream music press was exciting, even amidst the rare negative comments. "It's hard because here's the thing - you work on a record, put your whole heart and soul into it and someone writes three paragraphs about it and thinks they know the band," says Carden. "It's something that we've gotten over, we laugh more. You have a hundred things that are said good about you but then there is that one person that says something a bit nastier. It's like, come on, man. You get bummed, especially when you are younger. But we know what we are doing and now we are having a bit more fun with the whole thing. It's all part of the fun."

AP may have never tossed out a bad word about The Academy Is... but a few people with high-speed internet connections were quick to pick up the slack. Online forums often featured people discussing such meaningful topics as Beckett's skinniness and hair styles or the band's poor categorization as punk rock. "I don't think punk rock is the right word," Carden rebuts. "Is Death Cab (For Cutie) punk rock? Is Thursday punk rock? Fuck no. But it got coined that just because it was novel at the time." Now, he explains, everything that wasn't Creed gets a punk rock label. During an interview with a foreign press, the interviewer asked the band what it was like to be an emo band. "The guy classified all American music as emo," Carden laughs.

The headings of punk and emo get thrown around a lot and I offer Carden a possible explanation. So much of the initial punk movement was defined by D.I.Y. ethics. During a time when there were major label puppet masters and radio and television to dictate what people had access to musically; punk bands would instead record, release, promote, book shows, tour... all on their own. This self sufficiency became a major characteristic of punk music, almost as much as the sound itself. The internet slowly reduced the need to have a great independent music store to find unheard of bands, and after P2P platforms, social networking developed and essentially began toppling the labels and radio stations. Now every band can have a MySpace page, everyone with the same basic concept of four songs, some pictures, friends and comments. And as one person forwards a band's link to the next... you end up with an artist getting label and radio attention because the fans propelled such attention (Think Lily Allen) instead of the other way around. As a side-effect, everyone has an automatic dose of DIY ethics and, provided everyone in the band is male with slightly overgrown hair, they get called punk. "You can consider that my answer, too," Carden laughs. I tell him he can borrow it all he wants.

"This is where music is actually turning good," Carden says, referencing MySpace. "It is a much more organic and better way for music to progress as opposed to jamming things down." The Academy Is... have nearly 300,000 friends on MySpace and yes, the band handles their own account. They like hearing what the fans have to say and getting to write back. "It's the most important one because it's the one we can control," Carden sighs, listing all the aspects out of the band's control including decisions made by the label, radio stations, websites, magazines and television. I can tour, I can keep writing music and I can talk to people who like my band." But don't try to lay an advertisement on their page. That will get your comment deleted.

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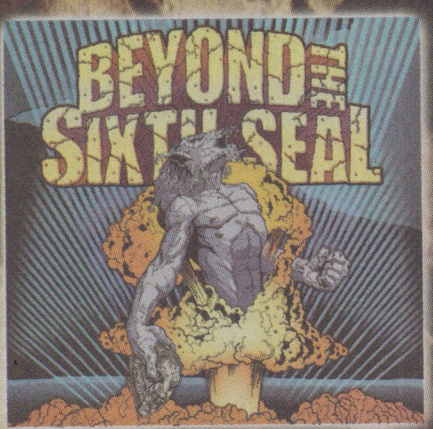
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AS FEATURED ON Music Choice aolmusic.com

Metal/Hardcore News, Reviews & Interviews By Ray Van Horn, Jr.

Death From Below

Introduction

Hail, my faithful headbangers! Spring is in the air and of course that means bands are en route to your city in droves. This also means that the summer schedule will be upon us quite shortly, and with it, the summer festivals. In fact, it might possibly be the best metal summer since the mid-eighties! God, I'm creaming my boxers thinking about it. Everyone's buzzing about the reportedly free Ozzfest this year, so I can only imagine what kind of summer this is going to be for everyone involved! I'm stocking the fridge with Guinness, heating up some Mexican pizza, peeling out the shorts and salivating for the live vibes coming at us during one of the best times of the year for music.

This month it is my honor to have drummer Atsuo of the Japanese drone metal unit BORIS as my special guest for Death From Below. Words cannot say how much I respect BORIS and how much I feel American metal bands can learn from what this band has conceived together, particularly in their magnificent live set. BORIS is hands-down my vote for best live act of 2006 and if you haven't gotten your ears around their fuzz-bombed masterpiece Pink, I pity your foolish asses. BORIS recently collaborated with SUNN O))) as you read months back in my review of their unified effort known as Altar. I salute you all for reading with a light buzz from vodka shots and Guinness chasers following a completed interview with Chicago's LUPARA, which you can read in another magazine at another date.

We have The Mountain King himself Jon Oliva stopping by with a very candid chat about SAVATAGE, TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA and his current band JON OLIVA'S PAIN, particularly their new album Maniacal Renderings. If you thought you've lived a life, have a read at what this man has been through…

For now, I thank you and your continued patronage to my column and AMP magazine. Come visit me at MySpace, add me as your friend, tell me what's up, I promise to write back. http://www.myspace.com/rayvanhornjr Drop me some words at pelican51270@yahoo.com. —Ray Van Horn, Jr.

SAVATAGE/TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA/JON OLIVA's PAIN

INTERVIEW WITH JON OLIVA

By Ray Van Horn, Jr.

I know this is probably a sore subject by now, but I can't help but mention that the whole TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA phenomenon is something that blossomed out of SAVATAGE's Dead Winter Dead album and still today most people are oblivious to the fact. It's crazy to me.

Yeah, it's crazy to all of us! (laughs) No one thought this was going to happen with this thing, that it was going to take off and be such a huge success, but it has, and you've just got to knock on wood and say thanks, you know? We needed it!

I remember when I first heard SAVATAGE as a teenager, it was "Washed Out" from Power of the Night, and I could never get over that shrill guitar riff that your brother Criss innovated. Afterwards you guys were forced to go on a different course with Fight for the Rock because of Atlantic Records. Then you began the progressive path that you guys became famous for. Let's get to that period of time in SAVATAGE's developmental stage and how you remember things changing musically.

I think the big change really came with *Fight for the Rock*, because that just such a bad year. Everything went wrong, from the record to management to the record company, just about everything that you could predict to go wrong went wrong. Meeting Paul (O'Neill, producer), I think, was the big turning point, because he did one thing that nobody else had done for us before, which was give us money! (laughs) It was so we could pay our bills and not have to freak out; he invested in the band. He said 'Look, we'll take care of all this stuff for you guys. Now you've got to sit down and write an album and not worry about how you're going to pay your rent next week.' The result of that was *Hall of the Mountain King*. From the time he took over kind of managing and working with the band, I think SAVATAGE started to rise to its greatest moments, which I thought was *Gutter Ballet* and *Streets*.

You bet.

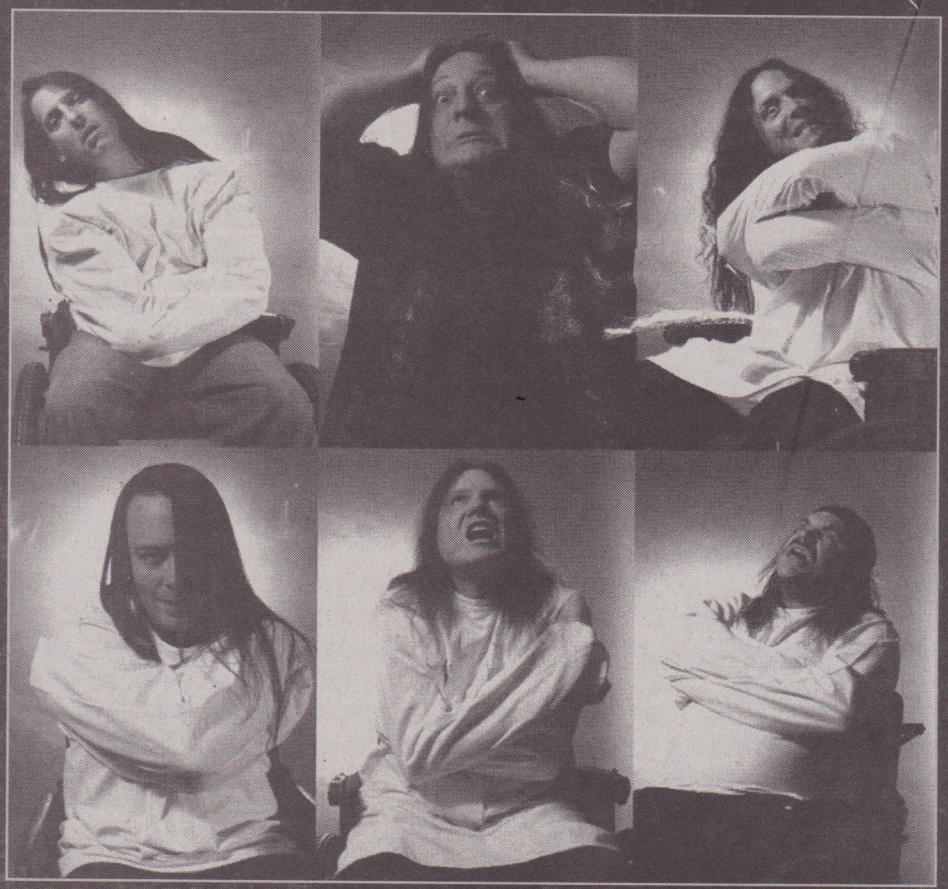
Of course, after Criss passed away, from that point on to me was more like the building blocks for TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA rather than there being SAVATAGE, even though it was *called* SAVATAGE. To me, it really wasn't the same after Criss died, so I chalk up *Dead Winter Dead* and *Wake of Magellan* to the birth of the orchestra.

Obviously you'd opted to step down as primary vocalist at that time and you temporarily did strict behind-the-scenes stuff in SAVATAGE, but did it seem surreal at all to watch it continue on? I know it was essentially a tribute to Criss, but I'm really interested in your perspectives of what was going on while the band kept on with you in a low-key role.

Well, the whole reason I left the band for that year was because I had voice problems one, and I had a nervous breakdown, which is two…

Completely understandable.

And I had been working since 1979-80 pretty much straight without there being any kind of a break, you know? I was just burned out and the original idea was that I was going to take a year off; I was going to help them with *Edge of Thorns*, play the album, write the album with them. They were going to go out and tour and we were going to introduce Zak (Stevens) and then the next album I was going to come back in the band and we were going to continue on with two vocalists, which is something we always wanted in the first place. Every band that we played with in clubs, we always had two or three guys that sang, but it was like 'No one else can sing, so you're signing!' I was like, 'I never wanted to be the only singer!' That's way too much of a thing on you to be the only voice. So this was the idea, and then *Edge of Thorns* came out and it was doing pretty good and they did the tour and it was pretty good and of course Criss got killed and that put everything into full reverse and then stop. The plans that we had were obviously shattered and crumbled when that happened, so from that point on it was just survival, then trying to figure out…you just don't replace Criss Oliva! We were trying to forge new territory with songs like "Chance" on *Handful of Rain* and "Christmas Eve Sarajevo 12/24" on *Dead Winter Dead*, which obviously became the first hit for TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA.



Right.

For me, that's what I think was happening. We were morphing into the TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA without really realizing it. Obviously when we did "12/24" we knew it was a hit song but we couldn't get it played anywhere! That's because it was by SAVATAGE, and that's extremely frustrating when you know you've got something that's worthy of the attention and they won't play it just because of the name. So the next year we took the exact same recording, ripped it off the SAVATAGE record, slapped a Christmas tree on the cover, sent it back to all the stations who the year before said it was not the type of music they broadcast, and every one of those stations sent us letters saying it was the number one most-requested song over 500 stations in America! That just goes to show that when we sent it with SAVATAGE on it, they just looked at the cover and said 'Oh, SAVATAGE, we can't play this!' and turned it away. That's very frustrating, and that actually was another reason why SAVATAGE was put on hiatus in a way, because we were just tired of bashing our heads against the wall and being labeled a heavy metal band from the eighties! (laughs) To me, it was just ridiculous and it was extremely unfair, you know? So we just had to do what we had to do, which was survive, to make a living. We gave SAVATAGE 23 years of our lives sticking it out and doing what we could do and no one would ever give us that opportunity to get in front of the mass people here, especially in America. We did well in Europe, Asia and South America, but in America it seemed like were just the redheaded stepchild! We had a great band with great songs and great music and they wouldn't play us anywhere!

I remember the original Headbangers Ball played the "Hall of the Mountain King" video for at least a month or whatever, and then later they played "Gutter Ballet" a few times, but then after that, it was like, what happened?

Yeah, they stopped playing us. It all came down to what the American music industry is like; it's all politics and money and chasing fads. It's all about money; it's not about music, which is fucked-up. We're a band, we're musicians, and there have been musicians since the world began, but they expect once you turn 30 to put a gun to the back of your head and shoot yourself! Especially now, if you're anyone that's been together for more than five, six or seven years, they never play you! (laughs) So now I'm just doing my own thing and I'm very happy with that. TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA is providing a good living for me and I'm happy about *that*, and you know, we'll get around to doing a SAVATAGE thing here in the next year or two and we'll just go from there.

I like to talk about how a lot of the symphonic metal being put today owes a lot of debt to bands like MANOWAR, CELTIC FROST and most importantly SAVATAGE, as well as TSO and JON OLIVA's PAIN carrying it over. Back then, it seemed to me that Streets and Gutter Ballet were high-risk projects as far as fusing neoclassicism into metal.

Yeah, it was a shot, but everything you do in this business is a risk. I think the thing that really sells the TSO thing is the fact that it relates to a lot of different people and a wide range of audience. When I go to the shows, it's like going to Ringling Brothers! There's kids there from six years old to people that are seventy years old. It's got a good message, it's about family, and I think it's quality music. Quality will always withstand the hands of time.

I'm really pleased that you Chris Caffery managed to get DOCTOR BUTCHER back out. There's obviously a different

tone to that project versus SAVATAGE and now JON OLIVA's PAIN. To say that DOCTOR BUTCHER can be considered therapy is probably a gross understatement!

DOCTOR BUTCHER was our black sheep of the family record! That was the do-whatever-you-want record, tell everyone to piss off and do what you want to do, so that's what we did! (laughs) We just had a hell of a good time and while we were having this good time we made a record, but that was always just a one-shot thing. It wasn't anything I wanted to do long-term, because a type of record like that, you can only do one or two of them before everything starts sounding the same. Musically it was very raw, not a lot of instruments, not a lot of tracks used on stuff. It was just pretty much an angry, pissed-off album, and it was a lot of fun. It was a good therapy album. It was like a criminal being let loose in a shopping mall! (laughs)

(laughs) With JOP, you guys have released two albums already, 'Tage Mahal and now Maniacal Renderings. If JOP is really SAVATAGE reincarnated as some people are saying, how much of the past do you see underscored in the new identity?

I don't know, it is what it is. Anything I do or write, sing or play is going to be compared with SAVATAGE because I wrote on every single SAVATAGE song that was ever recorded. I don't really compare it. To me, the JOP thing and the *Maniacal Renderings* album feels a lot like SAVATAGE in the *Mountain King / Gutter Ballet* period. I kind of went back to that work ethic that we were doing back then, which was spending a lot of time in the rehearsal room trying various versions of several different songs, different tempos, different tunings and different whole arrangements, and I hadn't done that for a long time. That, I think, and along with the fact that we've got some Criss Oliva riffs in there, gives it that SAVATAGE type of thing, but then everything I do is going to sound like SAVATAGE. Even TSO sometimes (laughs) sounds like SAVATAGE!

It's a beast you can't escape!

You can't, yeah! It'd be like trying to peel your skin off!

"Through the Eyes of the King" on the new album certainly has an autobiographical rant going on. You've seen a lot in your life obviously and the chorus 'What's this I see?' posits that on the song. Tell us what The Mountain King—yourself of course—saw that gave this song life.

That song was designed as the opening to the album. Basically I'm known as The Mountain King, that's kind of my nickname, so I wanted that song to be very similar to the original "Hall of the Mountain King." It's kind of its little brother, so there were pieces of music and parts and stuff that are purposely similar in style and tempo to the original song. That was done purposely because I was kind of wanting to take the listener from the first "Hall of the Mountain King" that SAVATAGE did and travel through a time warp all the way up to where we were now and then kind of say 'Well, this is what The Mountain King has been seeing through his eyes looking out at his domain.' I explain there, you see tragedy, you see misery, war, hate, famine, all the stuff that goes on through the song, and he's asking the question 'Have we doomed humanity? Is it too late? Is there time to see it?' Then the rest of the album comes after it and it just kind of goes more in-depth into the kind of things he sees. *Maniacal Renderings* is kind of like a demon offering type of thing; he shows you twisted visions of hell and all these things like that and he's a twisted soul running around in your body trying to get you to do all of these crazy things. Then "The Evil Beside You," this is another form of thing that The Mountain King is seeing. He sees people around people that try to screw up their lives and try to step over you and do all sorts of crap. There's always evil around you, so every song kind of goes through that, you know? He sees people doubting their religion, having questions about their faith, the crooked politicians in the song "Playing God." Every song has sort of a little vision of The Mountain King, which is me.

My favorite song is the title track because it combines both prog and straightforward rock with the cool backup vocals and the twisted narrative. As far as assembling that song goes, let's have your breakdown of it musically.

That was the toughest one to do because of the singing. We had to track…we had a couple of pieces missing and we found a great Criss Oliva riff to use in the end of the solo section and that helped, but it was really about putting the singing together that took so long, because it's all real people singing. It's all of us in the band and these guys haven't really done a lot of singing before (laughs) so I had to spend a lot of time practicing and coaching with them in the studio and to get everybody to do it, but we kind of followed the QUEEN format of multi-layering parts together. Instead of each guy singing a different part, we would sing parts in unison, then double-track them. They were all live vocals and then we would move onto the next part, and if the part became too high for someone to sing, they would be cast out. We'd call it 'cast out into the pit of eternal peril' and then the other guys would finish it off. It took a long time but it was worth it. I'm very, very happy with how it came out.

I like how "Push it to the Limit" goes for the jugular like the early SAVATAGE songs...

That was kind of written like that, like a little whip, a twisted little sister vibe. It's about this guy we know here in Florida who is just a nutcase! (laughs) Sweetest guy in the world, but he lives his life on the edge. He's the guy that if you have two beers, he's going to have 25! If you're driving 60 miles an hour, he's going to drive 96! That's where the whole idea for the song came from; this guy just keeps pushing it to the edge. Most people would've been dead a hundred times over! He just hangs in there, man, he's a living legend.

The undercurrent of madness that serves as narrator on Maniacal Renderings opens a lot of musical doors, so when you catch your groove songwriting-wise, do you feel there's a point of no return from the madness of your muse?

The point of no return is definitely…I don't know where it is, but I'm sure I'll run into it sometime! (laughs) You know, I just do what I do, man. I like to write and I write almost every day, so it's just my famous line: it is what it is. (laughs)

You touched earlier upon another SAVATAGE project, what the scuttlebutt is referring to as an official "farewell." You obviously have a lot of good things going on with JOP and TSO, but I understand you floated SAVATAGE to the tune of about a million bucks throughout the years...

Well, a lot more than that! (laughs) It's because I love the band and we're going to do something and who knows what'll happen after that? We could do something else or we may not. It's all in the lap of the gods, really, and how things work out schedule-wise with everybody, and if everybody wants to do it or not. I know Chris Caffery wants to do it pretty bad! (laughs) But I don't know if Johnny Middleton feels the same, you know? So I just have to see, and the main thing with that is having the time to do it properly, not just slap something together shitty and just throw it out there. If we're going to do it, I want to do it right.

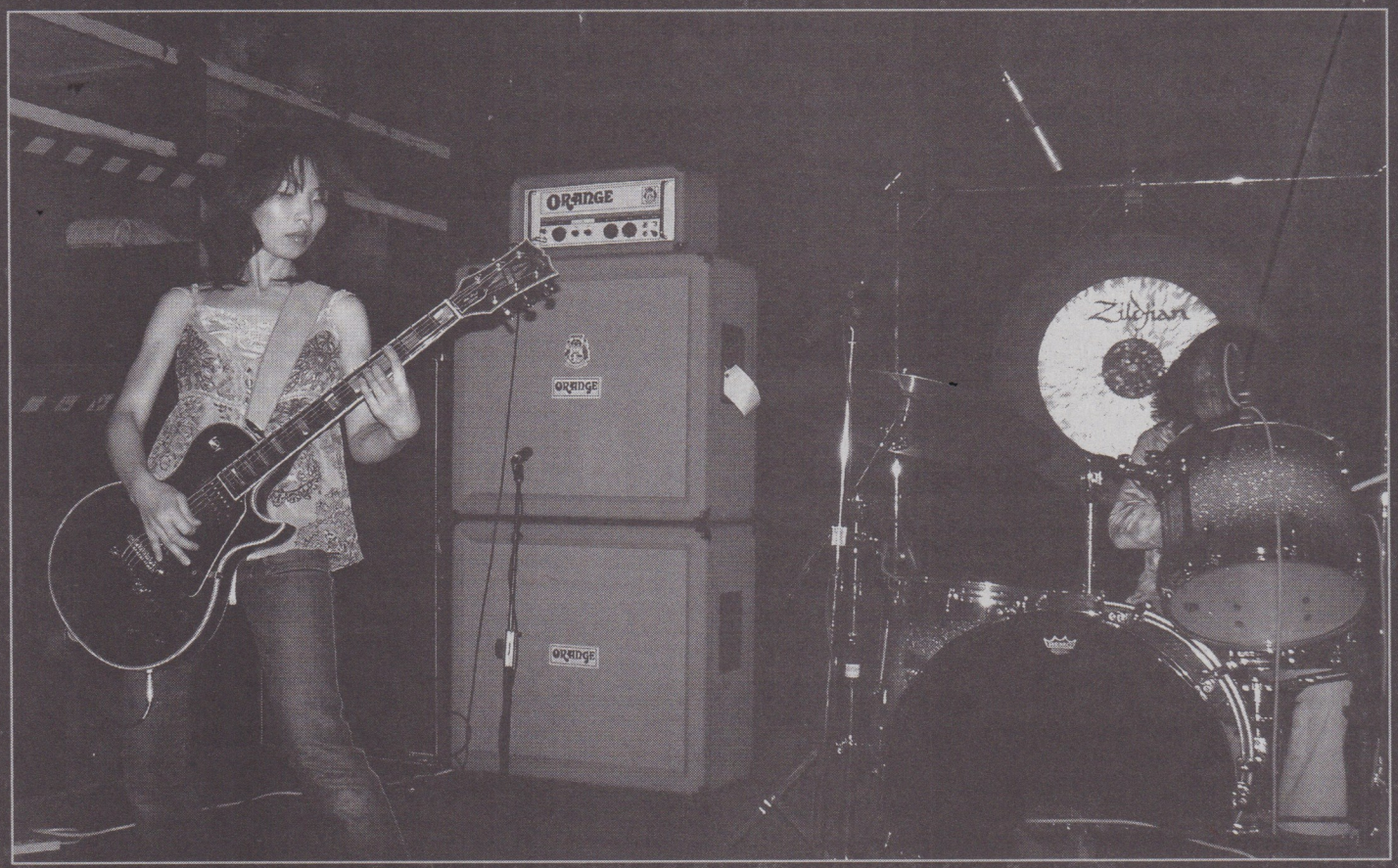


PHOTO: RAY VAN HORN, JR.

BORIS

INTERVIEW WITH ATSUO

By Ray Van Horn, Jr.

"Farewell" from Pink is easily the most amazing song I've heard this year. I think of THE PIXIES and SONIC YOUTH falling into a miasma of sound and still they can't match BORIS with the passion of that song. "Farewell" puts the listener into a trance with that slow, sonic melody before erupting into the quicker-paced "Pink" and "Women On the Screen." The sequencing of these songs is terrific, which I think is one of the coolest aspects of the album Pink. Was there any intention to luring your listeners in, then clubbing them over the head as these songs do?

Thanks a lot, I am really glad that you liked the song. Well, when we recorded the song, we didn't even decide the title of album. We recorded the song while we were jamming without thinking anything. The first take is used as the basic track. When we finished recording the song, I remember that I felt this song would be good for the last song for the album. Other songs were also made in the same manner, but we listened carefully and we decided what order we would put the songs in for the album. We used non-cut versions for the LP, so of course the order is different. The order is different between the LP and the CD. I guess each song taught us the order that it should be placed in. We don't create songs and edit intentionally; we are led by the songs in determining what order they should go in. Even now, we aren't really consciously making the next album.

(laughs) In some ways, Pink is a monster step forward from Akuma No Uta, something like putting a sort of pop rock feel to the songs on Pink without being pop music at all. In other words, Pink takes that loud, garage sound of yours to a different level of musicianship. Do you see it that way and how would you compare the recording of both albums?

I don't think it's a step forward.

Interesting. Why?

Each album and song has its own world. It's like we are pursuing the world that the songs made. Of course, the songs have had the essence of our favorite music from different times in our lives. After Akuma No Uta, we tend to make music that has a melody that we can sing together, and we tried to bring out the reality in each song. It's boring if the sound has no reality.

That's very deep, my friend. BORIS has come to the United States a number of times recently to play shows. When I saw you in Baltimore earlier this year, the club was filled up. Have you seen a big BORIS following start to build up here in the U.S.?

I really liked Baltimore. We have played shows three times at a club called The Ottobar. Every time we have played there, the reactions of the audience was really soulful and had a lot of energy. When we play a place that has great energy from the audiences, we respond the energy and it becomes even much better show. I think

a live show is the best place for communication between us and the audience, and we always try to play a show that generates great feedback.

I've interviewed a number of American and European bands who attest to being treated like honored guests when they play gigs in Japan, some to the point of being offered gifts as they get off of the plane. First, how would you describe the Japanese fans towards BORIS? Second, how do you feel BORIS is treated here in the United States?
Japanese audiences are more modest. I think a lot of people who come see us know music really well. I feel American audiences have a wider musical taste. I guess each person has his or her own way of enjoying the show. Some people listen to the music deeply, and some people enjoy the show with their bodies. I also feel that it changes by the places. Our music can be heard so many different ways. Each and all should enjoy our music as you like.

I agree wholeheartedly. Wata's Orange stacks have sort of started a trend over here. We haven't seen too many of those old-time speakers with American bands, but lately I've seen a few other bands bring out the Orange stacks. Do you feel the classic feel of the Orange stacks makes for a better sound projection, particularly for the sonic textures of BORIS' music?
Wata has been using the amp for more than ten years. The guitar won't play without Orange stacks. It's like a part of her body. Every time we go on a tour, it's the biggest problem whether we can find the amp or not at each place.

(laughs) Let's talk about the SUNN O))) / BORIS collaboration Altar, two groups who have heavy chord progression but at varying speeds. Aside from being label mates on Southern Lord, what attracted you to work with SUNN O))) on this rather intense project?
Aside from being label mates, we have been friends for more than ten years. It's really natural and inevitable to collaborate with them.

What I find interesting about Altar is that BORIS seems to force SUNN O))) to move a bit faster from its traditional drone element and in turns, SUNN O))) grounds BORIS somewhat. I think it's an interesting chemical dependency both bands have created for this project. What are your thoughts on this?
It's impossible to make this album if either one of the two didn't get "in." Both bands' good points are in this album, and this album amplifies those good points. In regard to your question, drone is an important aspect for both bands. SUNN O)))'s drone throws listeners into ecstasy. BORIS' drone forces people to wake up, and it's similar to noise music. Both aspects were mixed together perfectly and created the touch like that.



PHOTO: RAY VAN HORN, JR.

"The Sinking Belle (Blue Sheep)" is rather different than the other tracks on Altar. That was wild having Jesse Sykes sing on it as well. The song is actually more soothing than the heavy, cumbersome tracks like "Enta," "N.L.T." and "Akuma No Kuma." Did you feel that Altar was perhaps too dark and intense that a little changeup in the tone was in order?
You might notice if you have listened our albums that we easily get bored with things. I guess we recorded the song as third track. At the time of the recording, so many types of music were born. "The Sinking Belle" was made naturally and it was the most surprising song too. We listened carefully, and then our bodies just reacted the way the music wanted us to.

That being said, what's next for BORIS? Between Akuma No Uta, Pink and Altar, you all have released material in very quick increments. What can we expect of the next project?
Well, we already released the new collaboration album called "Rainbow" with Michio Kurihara. The U.S. version will release in June. Michio plays the guitar in "Ghost" and he supports on "Damon & Naomi." In Japan, he also plays the guitar in "The Stars" and "Ai Aso Band." He really is an amazing guitarist. We added him and he made the album, which has three lead guitar players. This album is one of my favorites, so I want you to hear it. I hope to tour with him eventually. For the fans, please look forward to this album!

PICK OF THE LITTER:

SKULLCRUSHER OF THE MONTH:

LAETHORA
March of the Parasite
Unruly Sounds/The End Records

Between this album and PHAZM's brilliant Antebellum Death 'n Roll, the darker legions of metal artists are deliciously turning the genre upside down with brave offerings that can be called experimental or simply the next logical evolution essential to its survival.



LAETHORA are comprised of members of DARK TRANQUILITY and THE PROVENANCE, and their pedigree can only prepare you in a marketability sense. Getting immersed into March of the Parasite is going to empower you as LAETHORA themselves have done with this unpredictable, infectious and dazzling effort. Impeccably mincing death, thrash, grind and prog motifs with a concerted exertion towards groove, March of the Parasite will rattle you on songs like "Clothing for the Dead," "Y.M.B." and "Black Void Remembrance" while pummeling you on "Revolution at Hand" and "Repulsive."

What's so remarkable about March of the Parasite is its intrepidness towards elevated artistry and in the process, brutally throws its listeners through audile turnstiles of thrash, just in case there was any doubts LAETHORA can crush. March of the Parasite is one of 2007's must-owns.

LORDI
The Arockalypse
The End Records

Already the legend of LORDI is weaving by the month it seems. Call 'em a GWAR knockoff if you wish, but these Finnish ghoul rockers have a lot going for them. In Finland, they have their own credit card, their own soft drink (Lordi Cola) and they recently defended their country at the 2006 Eurovision Awards by winning the whole kielbasa. It should be noted that Finland had previously finished last at the awards for years straight and ironically won with a group of shocksters that many of its conservative citizens cried foul over. Probably the same idiots accusing Prince of making a phallus with his guitar at the Super Bowl, one he's used since the mid-nineties, Jesus wept…

If all of this sounds as ridiculous as an album entitled *The Arockalypse*, it most certainly is, but the truth of the matter is that LORDI kicks ass! Pounding straightforward metal jams with a heavy dose of the eighties—in particular *Raise Your Fist and Yell* era Alice Cooper—LORDI creates dumb but infectious tunes that'll grab you quicker than you'll expect. I'm telling you right now, there's no escaping "Who's Your Daddy?" despite its comical misogyny because it's ironically catchy as hell. Even though you'll be laughing at the sheer stupidity of "Hard Rock Hallelujah," you'll be singing the damned thing in due time! Ditto for "Night of the Loving Dead," "Would You Love a Monsterman," "The Chainsaw Buffet," "Good to Be Bad" "The Kids Wanna Play With the Dead" and "Supermonsters (The Anthem of the Phantoms)."

The reason *The Arockalypse* works is that LORDI is unapologetic about liberally borrowing from the old school of hard rock and metal, so much that they wrangle up some cool guests of the past featuring Dee Snider and Jay Jay French of TWISTED SISTER, former KISS guitarist Bruce Kulick and ACCEPT's Udo Dirkschneider. You end up applauding LORDI for their audacity because all of this retro love is deliciously entertaining within its outlandish context.

The Arockalypse opens similarly to Wendy O. Williams' PLASMATICS-credited *Maggots: The Record* by creating a fictitious cataclysmic horror montage that includes Dee Snider as a newscaster. From there, Mr. Lordi growls and yowls while Amen the Unstoppable Mummy nails hard struck chords and sharp solos galore, driving *The Arockalypse* with their posse Ox the Hellbull, Awa the Vampire Countess and Kita the Alien Manbeast keeping a steady pulse all the way through the album.

Okay, so maybe they're not quite as cool-sounding as Oderus Urungus, Beefcake the Mighty or Balsac, the Jaws of Death, but what LORDI has going for them is some pretty good talent musically and a bucketload of rock-fueled energy. And anyone who tells you to kiss their bones as LORDI does is pretty danged killer in their own right.

DESTRUCTION
Thrash Anthems
Candlelight Records

If you go searching for old fifties music like Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard or THE COASTERS, if you're not careful, you're going to get stuck with a bunch of retread re-recordings of the original tunes that just plain blow, so beware and do your homework in that case.

In the case of DESTRUCTION, re-recording, re-arranging and having your original vocalist handle a few songs he wasn't originally around for sounds like a cheap ploy on paper, but actually, Thrash Anthems is a fucking barnstormer! Schmeir gives himself a sense of completion and DESTRUCTION in its current state is just as—if not more—lethal than when Eternal Devastation was recorded, as evidenced on "Deposition (Your Heads Will Roll)," "Release From Agony," "Mad Butcher," "Tormentor" and "Bestial Invasion." In some ways, the retro versions of these speed metal classics are better for their vintage stature, but credit where it's due; the new arrangements and cleaner digital recordings positively unleashes the hellhound material on Thrash Anthems with amazing vitality.

In actuality, this makes perfect sense when trying to reach a younger audience; hit them with the best technology you have to present high-octane thrash metal that kicks the shit out of 95% of what's being produced. That's educating them proper…

MELECHESH
Emissaries
Osmose Productions

Even though MELECHESH only has four albums in their thirteen year history, one thing can be said is that they don't release half-assed crap. In fact, I've often thought MELECHESH gives NILE a damned good run for the money (if not surpassing them altogether) for the ultimate Egyptian-themed black metal band. Sphynx proved that MELECHESH was creative as they are proficient, and the trend continues on Emissaries.

Growing even more dexterous in their impressive songwriting, MELECHESH continues to expand by incorporating traditional metal rhythms into new recruit Xul's quick-paced drumming and lightning-wristed guitar work from Ashmedi and Moloch. This motif offers balance to MELECHESH's unrestrained ingenuity as demonstrated on the infectious rocker "Gyroscope" and the heavy-handed "Leper Jerusalem."

Also incorporating choral elements into the band's winding metalscapes such as on the

two-part epic "Deluge of Delusional Dreams," "Ladders to Sumeria" and the larger-than-life "Double Helixed Sceptre," and then positively igniting their thrash attack on "Touching the Spheres of Sephiroth," MELECHESH have virtually succeeded in what sounds like a mission to whisk their listeners to a surreal Sumerian plane. Jack those horns way up…

TESTAMENT
The Spitfire Collection
Spitfire Records

Everyone knows the immaculate four when it comes to TESTAMENT: The Legacy, The New Order, Practice What You Preach and Souls of Black. These Atlantic-released classics still stand the test of time, while the jury is still in over the controversial The Ritual album (which I feel is rather underrated, to be honest) and audiences at-large have grossly overlooked Low, which is just shameful.

Even more so have they inexplicably missed out—unless you're a true metal and TESTAMENT fan—on two of the band's best and most brutal releases, Demonic and The Gathering. In fact, The Gathering really should be considered one of TESTAMENT's greatest albums period. Stop to consider that joining Chuck Billy and Eric Peterson in this time of turbulence was Dave Lombardo of SLAYER, Steve DiGiorgio of SADUS and James Murphy of OBITUARY and DEATH. Following the dark and nasty Demonic album, The Gathering harnessed its predecessor's viciousness and carried on the TESTAMENT name honorably and memorably. Of course, these albums were released not by Atlantic, but by career resurrectionist Spitfire Records, and while these sorts of retrospectives tend to be annoying at first glance, The Spitfire Collection is a tidy little look at a frequently missed period of TESTAMENT's career.

For market value, The Spitfire Collection tosses in recognizable live versions of "Souls of Black," "Trial by Fire," "Into the Pit" and "Practice What You Preach" from the live albums Live at the Filmore and Live in London, as well as the pointless redux versions of "The Preacher" and "Over the Wall" from First Strike is Deadly. Still, the real reason to pick up this anthology—particularly if you're oblivious to the latter portion of TESTAMENT's career—is to taste a sampling of Demonic and The Gathering. Seriously, you really do need to savor "The Burning Times" from Demonic and "Down For Life" from The Gathering, but furthermore, you need to savor the actual albums, because the selections on this compilation aren't fully representative of those albums' power as a whole. I suppose therein lies the inherent weakness of anthologies at-large, but you can't do too badly with this one.

SAXON
The Inner Sanctum
SPV Records

Wowzers… As if SAXON didn't sound rejuvenated on their previous album Lionheart, Biff Byford and company go straight for broke with a balls-out, gutsy performance that shows how it's done in power metal.



Crashing out like heralds of glory past on the soaring opening number, "State of Grace," SAXON spins it back not only to the Metalhead years, but also Wheels of Steel on the briskly-tempoed "Need For Speed," and Christ, listen to Biff holler on the mike! SAXON hardly lets up on the crushing third song "Let Me Feel Your Power," which may sound like Painkiller-era Priest and it may be lyrically silly, but hell, mates, bang thy heads anyway! It kicks bucko ass!



By the time The Inner Sanctum lets you take a breath with a solid power ballad on "Red Star Falling," SAXON settles into a driving finish home with good old-fashioned metal and blues rockers that never fall out of fashion if you dig this stuff proper.

I really, really wish it was 1987 and not 2007, because The Inner Sanctum would probably be knocking the metal world on its collective ass. In the new millennium, I guess SAXON and its loyal legion will have to settle for knocking some gray-haired minds out of their fucking skulls and hope the young 'uns take the time to recognize. The Inner Sanctum shows that pure metal can still persevere. You go, Biff…

THE HIDDEN HAND
The Resurrection of Whiskey Foote
Southern Lord Records

Keep your eye on my hometown of Baltimore, peoples… The land of CLUTCH, DARSOMBRA, THE MALEVOIY, TREPHINE and yeah, even KIX. Also stabled in the 'burbs of "B-More" or "Bawlmer" as the locals will joke, is the legendary Scott "Wino" Weinrich and THE HIDDEN HAND.

Rumors in town had it that something was amiss in THE HIDDEN HAND's camp, which would've been goddamned criminal if it had proven true. After two powerful psychedelic doom albums (and last year's *Devoid of Color* EP) and a live show you have to be witness to in order to truly savor, to be left devoid of Wino and THE HIDDEN HAND would be simply fucked up. The rumor, as it turns out, is only partially true. One sanction of fans were already announcing the demise of THE HIDDEN HAND, but the truth is that drummer Evan Tanner is the only deportee from the band, which is continuing on with Matt Moulis in his stead. At least Tanner stuck around to finish the band's third album *The Resurrection of Whiskey Foote*.

If there's a stark difference between *The Resurrection of Whiskey Foote* and THE HIDDEN HAND's last full-length album, the brilliant *Mother Teacher Destroyer*, it's the contrasting darkness of portions of the new album (i.e. "Spiritually Bereft") in addition to a few rockout numbers like the ZEPPELIN-esque "The Lesson," the swampy southern sludge of the title track or even the harmonica-assisted blues slammer "Lightning Hill."

The Resurrection of Whiskey Foote keeps its foot submerged in traditional BLACK SABBATH and SAINT VITUS bombasts on songs like "Broke Dog," "Dark Horizons" or "Someday Soon" while dispensing with a fraction of the trippy psychedelia of *Mother Teacher Destroyer*. One might say THE HIDDEN HAND is branching out while staying entrenched in the familiar, which makes *The Resurrection of Whiskey Foote* unpredictable and fresh. It also speaks as loudly as THE HIDDEN HAND when they're vibrating the balcony at The Ottobar in Bawlmer…

NOVEMBRE
Materia
Peaceville Records

One of the missed gems from 2006, Rome's NOVEMBRE put out the eloquent *Materia* after three records for Century Media, the last one being *Dreams D'Azur*. *Materia* is perhaps both a looser and tighter body of work that is also possibly NOVEMBRE's magnum opus of metal progression. Certainly whatever sourness existed between them and their former label has

unchained NOVEMBRE, if not figuratively, then musically.

Respected in various underground circles such as prog and death metal, NOVEMBRE embraces these styles on *Materia*, and the trio sparkles on their fluent songs that sequentially ebb between Gothic overtones, progressive articulation and sparks of aggression that makes *Materia* their crown jewel. Carmelo Orlando's vocals are enthralling, particularly on the breathtaking "Memoria Stoica/Vetro," which grows in strength through each stanza, driving towards a mainstream rock base in the final third of the song, much as "Aquamarine" does by soaring atop its building block of rock before pausing then jamming into a dreamy finale.

The way NOVEMBRE gels on this album is also heard throughout "Reason," which has shades of THE CURE amidst its progressive journey towards an uplifting climax; the duality of this song is what makes it masterful. Duality is what makes *Materia* such an intriguing listen. The death rasps that temporarily interrupt the swoon of Carmelo Orlando's vocals towards the end of "Aquamarine" fingerpoints the homogenous effect NOVEMBRE is effectively capable of producing, and in the end, *Materia* is one of 2006's lost treasures.

SHOTGUN REVIEWS:

CANNIBAL CORPSE
Vile: Metal Blade 25th Anniversary Edition
Metal Blade Records

This is going to be a great year for re-releases as Metal Blade parties hard for its quarter century mark. Already kicking off with the reissue of LIZZY BORDEN's intelligent Master of Disguise album from 1989, tagging along to the shelves is CANNIBAL CORPSE's 1997 gorefest Vile, an album most notable for hailing the introduction of George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher on the mike. What's to say about this album that hasn't been said already? Vile is sick, brutal and relentless, so much that you'll forget the album has started again if it's being played on loop. Highlight songs include "Mummified in Barbed Wire," "Disfigured" and "Orgasm Through Torture," but even cooler is the bonus DVD of one of Fisher's first gigs at Berkeley Square in San Francisco. One of the greatest death metal bands the U.S. has ever upchucked, having a return look at Vile might as well have been my Metal 101 selection this month. Crush…

BENEATH THE MASSACRE
Mechanics of Dysfunction
Prosthetic Records

If this album isn't full of enough brain-shredding insanity for you, consider yourself on the path towards a lobotomy. As if PSYOPUS' Our Puzzling Encounters Considered wasn't dizzying and breathtaking enough, Quebec's BENEATH THE MASSACRE outdoes them, at least in the outrageousness department. Following up 2005's maniacal Evidence of Inequity EP, Mechanics of Dysfunction goes for the throat with absurd speed, making most grind bands look amateurish in the process. Dennis and Christopher Bradley somehow keep pace amidst Justin Rousselle's inhuman drumming (I hate to think about what cartilage damage his ankles and knees have sustained to this point), and the faster this album gets, the more impressively concrete the rhythm section gets in response, if it's even fathomable. This one's not for the weak, assuredly…

XASTHUR
S/T
Moribund Cult

For someone reported to be a typecast recluse, XASTHUR principle Malefic has been consistently cropping out of his catacombs with material on split releases, individual albums and even collaborations and tour stints with SUNN O))). In some ways, Malefic ought to be considered a genius because his brand of black metal may carry the hapless dregs of despair his contemporaries do, but there's something poetic about his bleak compositions. On his final release for Moribund Cult, the self-titled *Xasthur*, he sweeps the airs from his caverns and protrudes his echoing screams in a grainy but darkly satisfying performance. The way the layered guitars chemically sculpt the three tracks on *Xasthur* aren't far off from what ISIS and NEUROSIS produce, yet it's Malefic's devotion to gloom that creates his own atmospheric proportion, navigating his tenebrous songs like a murky score to some yet-to-be-discovered cult horror film. Make no mistake, XASTHUR's music is malevolent as all hell, yet there's undeniable gratification to it as well. The harrowing melody through the second half of "Doomed by Howling Winds ('05)" says it all…



ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY
Open Fire
Relapse Records

And while were on the topic of pulp cover art, how can you not get excited by the Conan-like warrior swinging a bloody mace towards your face on the new ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY album *Open Fire*? It's as much a statement of their direction as the introduction of their new singer Kyle Thomas, formerly of EXHORDER and FLOODGATE. His brash and gravelly vocals set the mood on this extremely loud album, one that if you've been listening to this band for awhile is going to catch you off-guard with its…well, *thunder*. I mean, ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY has always been a boisterous bunch, but *Open Fire* does just that; they turn their guns loose and let 'er rip and the effect really is noticeable. Still adhering largely to their southern boogie rock and doom factors, *Open Fire* is not as sweaty as albums past; it's *sweatier* because the sound is more expansive and like HIGH ON FIRE, it sets out to rip you apart more times than not. Get you some, peeps…

EKTOMORF
Outcast
Nuclear Blast

Imagine SEPULTURA and SOULFLY rooting themselves (pun intended) in the Romanian regions, and this is an indication of what EKTOMORF sounds like. On Outcast, the bouncing agro tempos are so much in line with what Max Cavalera has been doing, particularly in SOULFLY, thus Outcast can be thought of its own territorial rendition of Roots, Chaos A.D. or the first SOULFLY album. Obvious parallels aside, there is some heartfelt punch amidst the similarities—as well as a mean cover of PRODIGY's "Fuel My Fire"—and with a raucous snarl EKTOMORF have uncaged one vicious animal with Outcast.

DOKKEN
From Conception: Live 1981
Rhino Entertainment Company

Before the eventual turmoil that made DOKKEN more of a household name than for recording some of the brighter rocking music of the eighties, they were one of the hungriest L.A. bands the scene nurtured. Becoming pop metal sensations towards the end of the decade, DOKKEN in its early stages housed an undeniable fire inside of them that culminated on their masterwork sophomore album Tooth and Nail. While somewhere in time I mislaid their debut album Breaking the Chains, it was a loss I accepted because that disc for me had sparks but not quite the conflagration of its senior, the aforementioned Tooth and Nail and even the subsequent Under Lock and Key that marked the

beginning of DOKKEN's approach towards the mainstream. This live recording from 1981 made me remember why I had Breaking the Chains to begin with. In actuality, From Conception: Live 1981 is everything Chains lacked in polished form. This is a raw and energetic performance from DOKKEN in its infancy stage, still working on its act, still finding its groove, still working on songs that would make it to Breaking the Chains and others that would not. That alone is the reason to listen to this recording, and getting to hear George Lynch polishing his chops—sounding better on rhythm than on his jagged solo section, which is pretty bizarre if you think about it—and Don Dokken showing off his growing prowess as an effective frontman. Jeff Pilson and Mick Brown are already where they needed to be at this point; it was all a matter of meshing, and to my ears, that's a delicious prospect to reflect upon. Forget the feud, forget the stigma, have a listen to this grimy and vigorous treat, and guess what? I couldn't wait to hear "Breaking the Chains" by concert's end. Funny how life is, eh?

ASSEMBLE HEAD IN SUNBURST SOUND
Ekranoplan
Tee Pee Records

I am rather digging this label; first, the wildly impressive TITAN with their senses-assaulting sludge-prog, and now this trio of trippy distortion explorers from San Francisco that brings to the table elements of sixties garage and mod rock along with more contemporary alt rock like DINOSAUR, JR., BLUR and BECK with a tendency towards breezy Neil Young-like lost in translation swoons as on "The Corner Zombies" and "A Bourbon for Rudy." While this reverberation is not wholly metal, there is plenty of metallic bliss beneath the hazy echoes that call up laidback psychedelia (subliminally like BIG BROTHER AND THE HOLDING COMPANY) along with weighty amplitude reflected on "Occult Roots" and "Ellen Koray." Real hepcat heaviness hovering here…

METALIUM
Nothing to Undo: Chapter Six
Crash Music

Perhaps METALIUM are trying to do musically what Robert Jordan does through fantasy novel serials, but regardless, here comes the sixth foray for this German power metal band that left us last with Demons of Insanity, which was both praised and panned by the critics. As the band's namesake hero Metalian continues his high adventure—decidedly in a painful manner this time around judging by the spine-ripping cover artwork and the conceptual lyrics that indicate a hellish, life-altering odyssey in this installment—METALIUM the band only gets stronger through its muse. Nothing to Undo is a forceful and confident album that sits nicely amongst some of metal's best power metal groups such as PRIMAL FEAR and DOMAIN. With some ripping guitar solos by Matthias Lange and convincing vocals from Henning Basse, this is one of METALIUM's best efforts, especially with a remarkably accurate cover of QUEEN's swan song masterpiece "Show Must Go On." You know what that means…

UNSANE
Visqueen
Ipecac Recordings

Speaking of way-cool labels on a roll, Ipecac, who can't dish out enough ISIS as far as I'm concerned, and who gave THE MELVINS another solid crack at the bat, bring us the latest from New York City sludge rock vets UNSANE. For a band that credits the New York subway system as one of their musical influences (ride it once and you'll see where they're coming from, trust me), UNSANE crams the urban sprawl of their daily lives with the backwoods muck of the Adirondacks on Visqueen, an album that is both loud and boggy in a pleasing manner. The irreverent swampy swirls of the opening track "Against the Grain" are just the beginning as UNSANE trods and plods through heavy tonal crushes on "Last Man Standing," "Windshield" and "Shooting Clay" while embracing a few hardcore roots on "This Stops at the River" and "No One," all incorporating swilled and airy guitars by Chris Spencer. As a trio, UNSANE brings the noise like the hissy screeching of the orange line beneath Manhattan.

CROWN THE LOST
Reverence Dies Within

Hailing from Steeltown, PA where football is suddenly in big trouble, this thrash unit has reportedly seen a rotating turnstile of members as fast as their sound—perhaps due to a cheeky edict that "wearing a shirt with sleeves is often grounds for dismissal in this band." Also making note that "roughly 17 out the 59 riffs heard on said album are stolen from CELTIC FROST's Vanity/Nemesis album," the truth about Pittsburgh's CROWN THE LOST is that they are well on their way to something great. This self-produced album is impressive not only for its velocity, not only for a killer rhythm section comprised of Joe Bonaddio, David E. Gelhke and Ryan Eicheldinger, but mostly for its unyielding devotion to the old school while incorporating many contemporary thrash and grind techniques. Vocalist Chris Renaldi yowls clean threads overtop the album's milling polyrhythm where most of his contemporaries these days are compelled to take the easy way out with hard vocals. The effect is startling at first, but the longer Reverence Dies Within minces on, Benaldi's vocals—which defer to the occasional growl or two—provide for a unique listen. Production-wise, you can't ask for much better for a self-released album; in fact, this might be the perfect demo for a prospective label. Hails, guys… www.crownthelost.com

STINKING LIZAVETA
Scream of the Iron Iconoclast
At a Loss Recordings

And if that isn't enough sludge for you, step up to a solid hour's worth courtesy of Philadelphia's STINKING LIZAVETA. A very eclectic jam band, STINKING LIZAVETA slaps together doom, sludge, stoner, traditional metal, acid rock and jazz bits into their sprawled instrumentals that frequently stray into psychedelic pastures and then bumble their way back to the beaten path they already schlep along. Not a bad way to live musically. Brothers Alexi and Yanni Papadopoulos and drummer Chesire Agusta burst and bumble in their drop-tuned quandaries, and they play to their own sonic speed on Scream of the Iron Iconoclast, which is mostly at a liquidy, lackadaisical pace. A long foray to follow, this is nevertheless as greasy as doom gets…

HELLOWEEN
Keeper of the Seven Keys: The Legacy World Tour 2005/206 – Live on 3 Continents DVD
SPV Records

It's nice to see HELLOWEEN all settled in given the tumultuous path they've led over the years. Andi Deris has more than made this his band, so much only the old guards of HELLOWEEN fans bring up Michael Kiske's name. Touring extensively throughout the globe (unfortunately with only a handful of dates in the fickle United States) in support of Keeper of the Seven Keys: The Legacy, HELLOWEEN captures themselves performing in the suddenly new mecca of metal, Sao Paolo, Brazil along with Sofia, Bulgaria and Tokyo, Japan. The Sofia and Tokyo footage is randomly inserted, mostly as alternate views and intercuts of Dani Loble's drum solo and Sascha Gerstner's guitar solo. The production is sharp, the sound clean and as HELLOWEEN barges through "The King for a 1000 Years," "Eagle Fly Free," "A Tale That Wasn't Right" and "If I Could Fly" along with fan favorites "Dr. Stein," "I Want Out" and "Future World," one can detect just how professional HELLOWEEN is in its execution, though some silly "battles" during the solo sections keeps things from getting too serious. The second disc takes the viewer a little deeper into the tour and offers some viewpoints from the band, as well as presenting "Halloween" live at the Masters of Rock festival. Now that all the dust long settled in the HELLOWEEN camp, it's a beautiful thing to see how well they homogenize together, in particular how easygoing

Michael Weikath appears these days now that he has a stable roster. You might say it's one of those happy ending stories you have to applaud.

ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY
Open Fire
Relapse Records

How can you not get excited by the Conan-like warrior swinging a bloody mace toward your face on the new ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY album Open Fire? It's such a statement of their direction as the introduction of their new singer Kyle Thomas, formerly of EXHORDER and FLOODGATE. His brash and gravelly vocals set the mood on this extremely loud album, one that if you've been listening to this band for awhile is going to catch you off-guard with its well, thunder. I mean, ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY has always been a boisterous bunch, but Open Fire does just that; they turn their guns loose and lets 'er rip and the effect really is noticeable. Still adhering largely to their southern boogie rock and doom factors, Open Fire is not as sweaty as albums past; it's sweatier because the sound is more expansive and like HIGH ON FIRE, it sets out to rip you apart. Get you some, peeps.



KROKUS
Hellraiser
Locomotive Records

One thing you can't accuse Marc Storace of: giving up. Given that KROKUS has had their dog's day in the early and mid-eighties (at one time, you were guaranteed to get at least a stinkfinger by playing "Screaming In the Night"), the entity continues to march in one form or another behind Storace the Indomitable. Never mind that KROKUS essentially took a nosedive southward after their dreadful Change of Address album in 1986 and the band never rebounded commercially. Storace's never-say-die determination for another two decades and nine studio albums including the band's latest offering Hellraiser garnishes merit for his tenacity. Better yet, Hellraiser is a damned fine hard rock album that has its own identity with maybe a few nods to the past on albums like Metal Rendez-vous or The Blitz. Mostly this album is its own beast that dispenses with much of the AC/DC vibes that have scourged this band historically in the eyes of many American fans. Songs like "Hangman," "Midnite Fantasy" and "Fight On" possess a different drive that is perhaps more contemporary, while the anthemic "So Long" is more indicative of the old days without being derivative schmaltz. Then the brisk-tempoed "Spirit of the Night" warmly calls upon KROKUS' finest hour Headhunter and still it sounds invigorated. In all, Hellraiser shows that Storace is well in his zone. This is a welcome treat from an old friend who refuses to go away. Cheers…

THE CURSED
"Evil, in the Bag" single
Screaming Ferret Wreckords

With a bunch of bands lurking out there known as THE CURSED, let's trim the fat and talk about one that includes OVERKILL's mainstay vocalist Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth and former HADES guitarist Dan Lorenzo. Lorenzo and drummer Mike Cristi come from NON-FICTION, who did a tour with OVERKILL in the early nineties, and with MURDER 1's Job the Raver on bass, here we have a who's who configuring THE CURSED. Screaming Ferret Wreckords gives us a one-song teaser into the forthcoming album A Room Full of Sinners and I think we're in for a unique treat. The swampy riffs on this song hint stoner rock with a Gary Glitter strut rhythm. With a few horn blats and laidback, shriek-less vocals from Ellsworth, this becomes one of 2007's most curious projects to keep an eye on.

DOL AMMAD
Ocean Dynamics
Electronic Art Metal Records

Picking up where he last left off with the lavish *Star Tales*, DOL AMMAD mastermind Thanasis Lightbridge delves deeper into his celestial tones, this time coating his epic metal compositions with gratuitous electronic and choral layers on *Ocean Dynamics*, an album that is less stark than its predecessor but possesses even more atmospheric flair. Since *Star Tales* was released, there has been nearly triple the amount of practitioners adopting neoclassicism within their metal infrastructure, some to good effect, many not so much. If anything, *Ocean Dynamics* has the sense and good taste to explore both the power and tranquility of its muse instead of trying to outdo the speed of light sensation that *Star Tales* was. This time around, the double-hammer bass grooves provide a base for the gliding textures of Lightbridge's towering chorus ensemble and his flamboyant keys and programming. At times, *Ocean Dynamics* takes on an ENIGMA-like feel, while it gets downright funky on "Descent." Fret not, metalheads, Lightbridge and his assembly literally jettison on "Aquatic Majesty" and they rock out on "Liquid Desert," but again keep in mind that *Ocean Dynamics* is a product of its inspiration, not necessarily the other way around. That is where this album succeeds admirably.

FURZE
UTD
Candlelight Records

There's not a lot of words I can use to describe this ghastly black metal experience. This is darkly private music, as depraved as you're going to find out there. Norway's Furze creates hit-and-run nonfigurative metal that is unbearable at times and thoroughly compelling at others. One thing I will say in Furze's favor; if you think you've heard all that black metal has to offer, think again. UTD leaves scars.

HOLY MOSES
***Queen of Siam* reissue**
Locomotive Records

HOLY MOSES has been getting a lot of underground love lately, and if I didn't make it clear enough in my review of their *Finished With the Dogs* reissue a month or so back, this band is one of the unsung heroes of thrash and death metal. Now comes the second chance for *Queen of Siam*, and while some listeners may think the recording is antiquated (analog versus digital, you know), there's no denying the impressive force HOLY MOSES expunges on this 1986 album, right in the heart of when thrash was about to take off, and right as fellow German thrashers KREATOR and DESTRUCTION were about to set the metal underground on its bleeding ear. As always, Sabina Claussen vocally outpukes even the sovereign herself, Wendy O. Williams, and perhaps only Williams' PLASMATICS-credited *Maggots: The Record* can outdo the velocity of HOLY MOSES. Of course, Claussen makes a stake for her own outrageousness on "Don't Mess With the Bitch" and her hilarious low-range Lemmy Kilmeister imitation on "Road Crew." While HOLY MOSES only stood to get better on future releases, songs like "Necropolis," "Bursting Rest" and the ultra-raw "Walpurgisnight" demonstrated the efficiency of their riffs and tempered guitar solos that would be make this band a largely overlooked entity.

THE MARVEL NO-PRIZE AWARD GOES TO...

Lightspeed
Anchor Bay Entertainment

If you're a diehard Marvel Comics fan, then

sometime over the point of your reading history, you tried like the devil to catch the writers and artists in error, thus qualifying you to write in and claim a "no-prize." The catch is, it is your responsibility to come up with a pliable (and especially imaginative) reason for the error. I caught something in *Fantastic Four* somewhere in the mid-eighties and never got my "no-prize" acknowledged, the competition is that fierce.

Chances are, a good number of you headbangers out there are comic freaks or at least were at one time, so when Stan Lee's Sci-Fi original feature *Lightspeed* hit my mailbox, surely it was no-brainer to spread the word to you fine people. Unfortunately, the word is not so good. This 2005 flick may have been a building block to Stan's hilariously shticky *Who Wants to Be a Superhero?* reality show spoof, but unfortunately *Lightspeed* is a reinterpretation of DC Comics' *The Flash* and far less interesting. Perhaps there's a tongue-in-cheek design to *Lightspeed* in that our hero, played by *Smallville's* Jason Connery, isn't your typical-looking do-gooder, especially not as valiant-looking as the cover art would indicate. *Lightspeed* is a slightly older dude in a ski costume (or aerodynamically correct, as he states) squaring off against an old buddy turned serpentine terrorist name Python (played by *Beastmaster's* Daniel Goddard).

In theory, the nemesis of Python is a loose reflection of Hyrda, the snake-themed terrorist organization who primarily haunts the hell out of *Captain America*, but Python mostly looks like Darth Maul when he has his hood draped, and mostly he just shoots the crap out of everyone in sight in gory fashion. When he inadvertently converts *Lightspeed* into his namesake after a foiled assassination attempt, our hero, who is miraculously recovering from a building collapse, discovers he has amazing running powers. However, the catch is that he is dependent upon a test chemical agent administered by the hospital. Get the picture? *Lightspeed* dashes through repeat stock footage as he chases down Python, who seeks to strip his nemesis of his true love, *Baywatch's* Nicole Eggert, at the same time, destroy America with his bombs.

The problem with *Lightspeed* is its low budget that is maybe a shade better than what was given to do the original *Punisher* movie with Dolph Lundgren, one of the worst superhero films ever waved in our faces. The makeup for Python is good, and the many blood squibs that fling like a Sam Peckinpah fiesta are well-done, but the story is weak, and the finale is just dreadful. Having Lee Majors in a bit role as the leader of the covert team known as The Ghost Squad (um, yeah) is blatant and pointless. Nick Fury Majors is not. In fact, it summarizes the project as a whole: cheap and obvious.

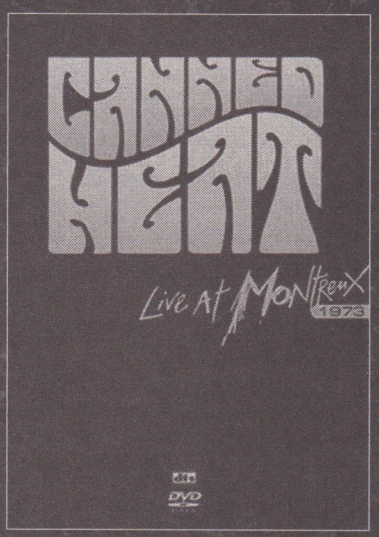
Surely the godfather of the modern age of comic storytelling has learned a lesson or two since *Lightspeed* came out; there are detractors of the *Daredevil, Hulk, Fantastic Four* and *Elektra* movies, but those *X-Men* films were all winners and who isn't looking forward to *Spiderman 3* and *Ghost Rider?* While there's not much "Excelsior" to *Lightspeed*, there are plenty of characters in the Marvel mythos that could work in a small-scale realm as was attempted here, if done with better care. I would personally love to see Moon Knight, Black Falcon, Power Man and Iron Fist or even Hawkeye get a shot.

METAL 101

CANNED HEAT
Live at Montreaux 1973
Eagle Vision

Hopefully you all have taken enough of a journey in your heavy metal exploration to realize that the blues is one of the form's core principles, much as the blues is directly responsible for the fifties rock 'n roll revolution, which of course is metal's true forefather. Renowned as one of the great American heavy blues bands, CANNED HEAT is sometimes forgotten in the grand analysis of hard music. At least BLUE CHEER is starting to get recognized more and more, but you can't bring up one and leave the other omitted. After all, even before LED ZEPPELIN a healthy rivalry existed between CANNED HEAT and BLUE CHEER for honors as the loudest band in the world, which CANNED HEAT won for a brief moment in rock history.

When you see classic photos of guitar gods striking poses in front of towering Marshall stacks, give thanks—or blame if you like—to these two bands, although of late it appears to be hip to return to Orange cabinets (as we discussed briefly in the BORIS interview).



Like Leslie West and MOUNTAIN, the legend of CANNED HEAT extends far beyond their memorable performance at the original Woodstock, much less their festival anthem "Goin' Up the Country" that can be heard in shrewd advertisements looking to lure baby boomers into stock and retirement portfolios. Already to this point notorious for being locked up for drug possession (which surviving member "Fito" de la Parra recounts as being a police plant), CANNED HEAT crashed onto the sixties rock scene as a working class bunch of mugs who played loud, dirty blues and boogie with shades of acid rock, and as their celebrity grew, so did their amplitude as well as their lengthy solo sections during famous jam sessions known as "The Boogie." Heretofore CANNED HEAT should be given full due for their place in metal history, as they should also be considered forerunners to ZZ TOP.

Live at Montreaux 1973 captures CANNED HEAT at a point in time where many bands might've fallen to pieces from the turbulence they were forced to deal with. With members swirling through the turnstiles and the unfortunate suicide of musical genius and key songwriter Alan Wilson, the CANNED HEAT depicted on this DVD features a slightly slimmer (but much scruffier) Bob "The Bear" Hite, who seems to be bearing some of the brunt of the speedballs that would later do him in. On the other hand, The Bear looks positively overjoyed at this gig as CANNED HEAT is in full sync on standards like "On the Road Again," "Let's Work Together" and "Rock and Roll Music" in a time period following their Hooker and Heat collaboration with blues legend John Lee Hooker. There's a certain swagger to CANNED HEAT at this point from having been recognized by not only Hooker, but the blues community at large and whereas older CANNED HEAT footage shows the band as excitable ruffians onstage, there's a more relaxed candor here.

In this performance, unsung blues persona Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown checks in for a three song guest spot and he literally takes over the set with his stage gesticulations and his impressive prowess on the guitar, the harmonica and even the violin, which he astonishingly makes sound like a guitar's sonic reverb at times. For good measure, Brown displays his string slapping technique that would be made famous by Flea of the RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS on the bass. To see what Brown does on the guitar almost makes you forget this is CANNED HEAT's show.

Included is a two-and-a-half hour documentary "Boogie With Canned Heat – The Canned Heat Story," mostly narrated by Fito. Seriously, if you think you've seen turmoil in a rock documentary, nestle in and pay close attention; this story is long but difficult to turn away from. In summation, if CANNED HEAT's legacy is primarily vested in the blues, let us not forget that heavy metal owes them alms as well…

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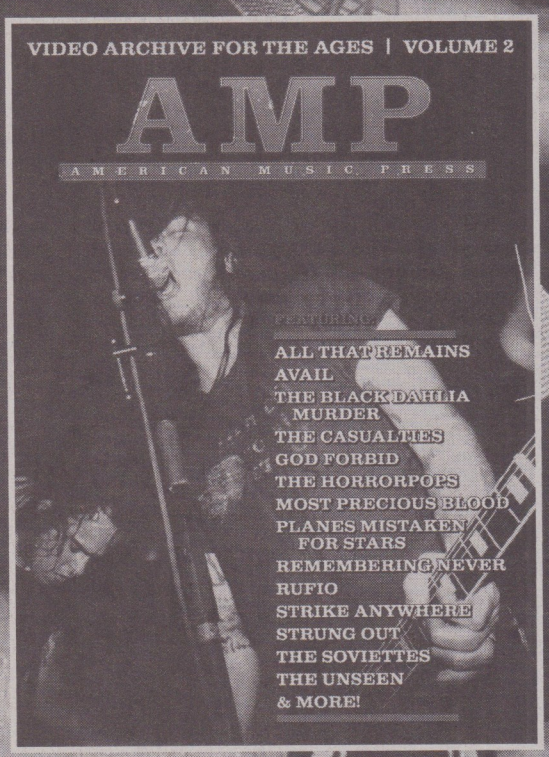
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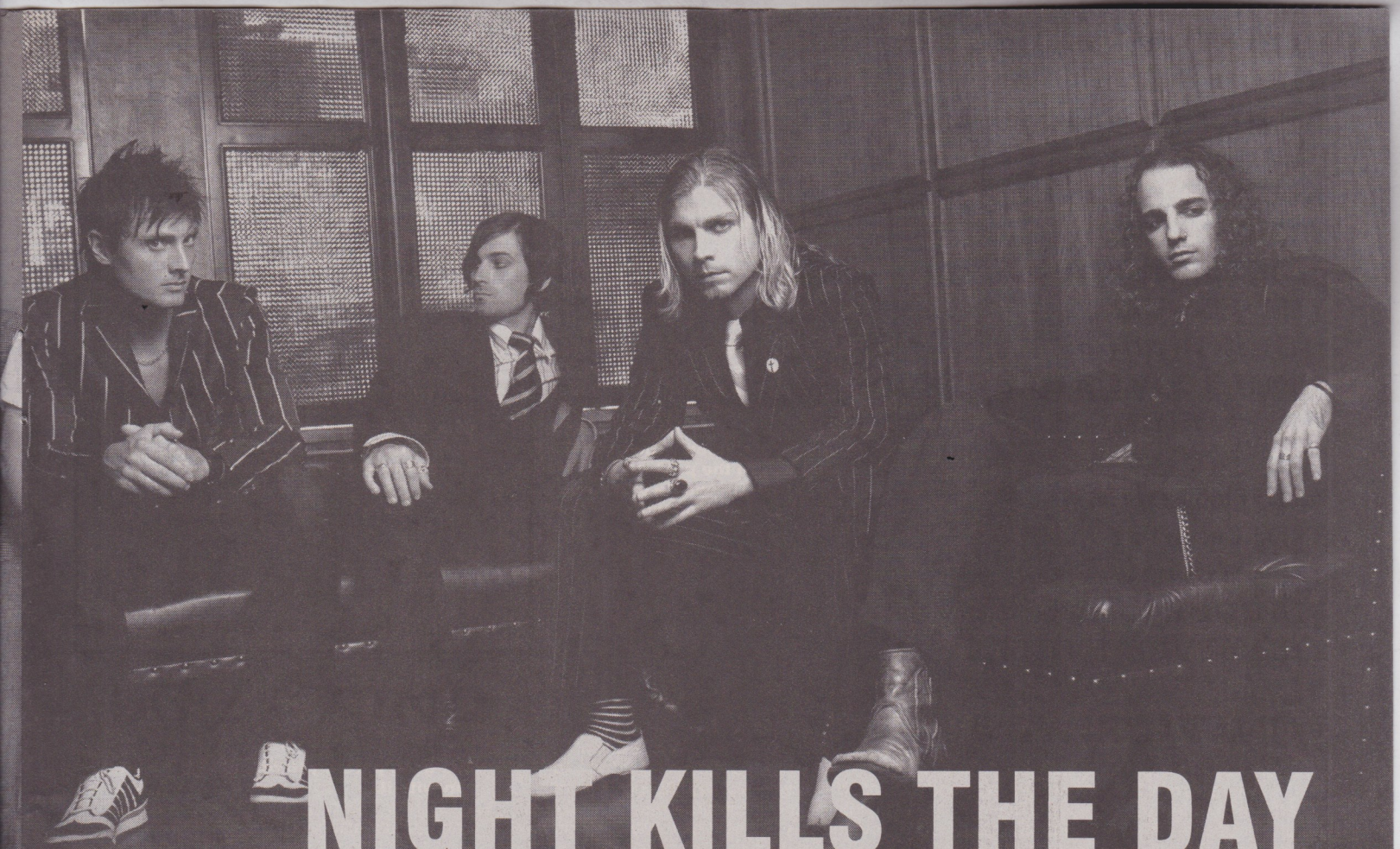
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NIGHT KILLS THE DAY

AN INTERVIEW WITH LUKE BRIAN

By Ray Van Horn, Jr.

You guys have had a lot of life experience in New York, which really comes out in your sound, both musically and lyrically, using "Rainbow in NYC" for example. What is the allure in your opinion to slug it out, so to speak, in a competitive city like New York?
For me, New York is a very intriguing city. The energy here is massive, and to me, New York City is sort of like the eye of the storm. There's something about humanity here that at this point and where I am in my life, I'm very intrigued by that side of humanity. That's why I've stayed put. I truly love the ocean, I grew up where there was water, and one day I would like to be near the ocean again, but at this stage in my life New York is definitely my home. There's a lot of positive reasons why I love New York. There's so much culture here, there's tons of opportunities, there's museums here. Anything you need is at your fingertips. The reason I'm in New York is there's massive energy here that creatively, I completely feed off of. This band is a very New York band in a weird kind of way.

Before it closed down, did you guys get to play CBGB's?
Yeah, we played CB's a few times, but we were actually banned from CBGB's because when New York enforced smoking laws in the clubs a few years ago Timothy (Falzone, bassist) lit up a cigarette onstage, and the soundman didn't really like us in the first place because we brought our own soundman, and he basically told us right then and there he was going to shut us down. He shut off my mike, so I told the guys to continue to play and then I just sang and me and the soundman started having a big fight. They were going to get security to come in and basically say we were inciting a riot.

That's a fucked-up thing to do!
It was a great show, though! (laughs) It was a lot of fun! Then we played just recently before they closed because we changed our name to NIGHT KILLS THE DAY and we played with the RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS. When we played that night, it was very positive, man. Every time we've played CB's was very cool.

Do you think New York eats some people up? That's the vibe I get every time I'm up there. It takes a lot of fortitude and a healthy income to make it there.
Oh, a hundred percent! New York's eaten me up and spit me out twice (laughs) and I'm being dead serious about it! Yeah, it definitely takes a lot of income and it takes an ability to hustle. We figured out a way to make it happen while we were supporting ourselves as a band. We found ways that we could get by, which basically includes the night life. New York's not for everyone. I see a lot of people come and then leave, you know? For me, New York is the belly of the beast and I literally want to dive headfirst into the rat race of life, of man. My mother was a Dominican and my father was a Franciscan brother and he was very into eastern philosophy. There's a lot of mysticism in my house; I like a lot of the mystics and read a lot of the mystics...there's something out there as well that's very captivating for me, but where I'm at in my life now, at the age that I am with the energy that I have, New York's the perfect place for me.

From your bio, I gather that you and Timothy have done your share of suffering that essentially led to the foundation of NIGHT KILLS THE DAY. Music is naturally therapeutic for practitioners much less serious listeners. I know at one point in your life, you purposefully drove off of the road and have had other hard life encounters. Describe what kind of healing effect music has had for you.
I just always found salvation in music growing up. One of my favorite things to do when I was fifteen was listening to music by myself. The band, me and Timmy have been best friends since I was five years old, so there's a lot of history to it and the members in the band, there's a brotherhood as you will, it's a really nice bond. I would say music is without a doubt a release. It's also a process of passing the time from Point A to Point B. I'm an artist, I went to art school and music is by far the most powerful form of art. I love to paint, but I'm a lyricist and writing

is very immediate for me, but when I get to breathe life into what I've written and sing it, there's something very therapeutic about it. There's so many elements of why I enjoy it. When you're writing a song, there's really nothing else going on; you're very consumed by it. I also really enjoy the challenge of it because I get to see how intricate my own mind is and how many obstacles I need to overcome and how many obstacles I *can* overcome, and how far my mind can actually go. It's a good way for me to test my own abilities as a human being, you know? Then there's the very intimate level of what it's like to create with other people that you're close with, being in a band. The real cherry on the top is when you get to actually share it at a live show with an audience and connect with people. I think at the end of the day, that's what I really want more than anything, the connection with other human beings, you know, something that isn't on a fucking Coke can billboard. Something that feels real in an unreal world.

I hear a multitude of different sounds and vibes in your band, which I detect was amassed through years of music consumption. You and Timothy did a lot of weekends working in clubs, which I'm sure had a monstrous effect on developing your sound. Describe that whole club scene and how it affected your craft.
(laughs) I will tell you that "Rainbow in NYC" was inspired from Timothy working a house party one night. I *knew* we were going to put a house beat to that song! Musically, I think that's the only thing inspiring of it. The New York City nightlife is like anything else; there's the façade of it and then there's what exists beneath it, so possibly some of that darkness that we take home with us is what inspires the music. I write a lot, but every single night that I work, every time I'm on my way home from work, between 4:30, 5:00 a.m., that is when I write most of the stuff, so lyrically by far the nightlife in New York is *very* inspiring. It's one of my muses, you know? It's what the song "Meaning" on the album *(The Study of Man...and the Developed Shadow)* is in reference to, it's what the song "Dive" is. You ever been in the bathroom at a club and you hear a roar or a rumble outside the door and it sounds like a fight? Then you walk out the door and there's nobody fighting! It's almost like you heard the frequency of this groan of man or something. That's what inspired the whole song of "Dive." The clubs weren't rock clubs because you don't make any money at rock places, but the nightlife that we worked in New York was of a different breed than the nightlife that we are in when we go out, you know what I mean? The places we hang out are much different than the places that we worked in.

You guys bring a large diversity of music influences like SISTERS OF MERCY, THE CURE, Miles Davis, DEPECHE MODE, MUSE, SUPERGRASS, MINISTRY, SLIPKNOT, THE SMITHS, Iggy Pop, Mozart, and what I always like to preach to people is to never get stuck in one genre.
Our two main philosophies of the band are to remain open-minded and defy art and challenge your mind. We fight with each other if we aren't open-minded to other kinds of music; that's what we fight about the most, if someone doesn't appreciate a band that other people appreciate, you know? Even in New York there are a bunch of different scenes going on and everyone was cool with us and we were cool with everyone and they would always want to play and we would play with them, but we feed into a bunch of other areas there too, you know? We're a little bit like a bunch of misfits, but yeah, there's a ton of influences.

On *The Study of Man...and the Developed Shadow* you guys have a recurring theme of sex and addiction and how human beings are inherently weak without proper spiritual guidance, as I would call it. You guys have been witness to a lot of debauchery in the past, so how would you summarize the whole phenomenon of mankind's obsession with sex and addiction?
What it comes down to at the end of the day is...I have been for a very long time...the way I look at the world, I kind of want answers and it's very hard to get. I was watching the news; the news is really fucking depressing, man! I had to shut it off to clear my mind! All you really need to do is turn on the news and you'll understand everything I'm talking about. Drug addiction and sex is just a G-rated version of the *real* underbelly of man. Last night I was in the city in a cab with a friend of mine and it just kind of clicked—you get so numbed and conditioned by how things are that sometimes you lose sight of how fucking insane they really are! I got to thinking, okay, a man disagrees with another man, there's two different belief systems. In 2006 we literally send thousands and thousands of men to go murder other men, and basically these other men murdered their friends and basically what happens is that at the end of the day—because those two men obviously disagree—a man will bash in another guy's head with a rifle butt and after he's done he'll just be sobbing because he doesn't even know what's driving him or what-have-you. So for me in my little world and my own surroundings, yeah, I definitely have struggled big-time with drug addiction. I stood in a methadone line in Harlem for a year, that's part of my story, man. This is what me and Timothy are pretty eye-to-eye with this stuff, and so is the rest of the band, but I focus on that because at this point in my life, those are the main areas of my own humanity that I've struggled with and I've tried to combat and beat. I think it's really simple; it comes down to the ego of man—which is why I live in New York City—and my own personal life, and then there's the spirit of man. I see a war that's going on in the world and the spirit of man is losing, because if the spirit of man was winning, we wouldn't be sending thousands and thousands of men off to murder each other because of different belief systems. That doesn't make any sense to me. That *does* make sense to me, however, if I'm going to think of my own ego and my lower self. This band is really about the duality of man and we have this entire thing of what's called the pendulum theory, which is how far the pendulum swings before it'll swing on the other side. I would much rather go through life with that thing really swinging than it just being dead stop in the center. To be honest with you, that pendulum is really swinging, you know? I might feel more inner peace than the next guy and I don't know if that's true because it's just me, but I can experience both the inner peace and I can experience the confusion. As for sex and addiction, what it comes down to is mankind's instinct for procreation and there's an instinct for power, and there's subdivisions of those two things, and it's interesting how warped those actual instincts can get in a human. That's what this album is about.

Do you think the greatest high is coming to terms with yourself, kind of embracing your strengths that are hopefully nurtured instead of taking the easy way out towards one's weaknesses?
If you're talking about where I am now versus standing in that methadone line, then yeah, because I've now embraced my strengths and back then I was embracing my weaknesses, but I didn't know that at the time and nobody who was standing in that methadone line—wherever they are in life—really knows yet. I was just one of the lucky ones who got a second chance. Weaknesses can be turned into strengths and strengths can be turned into weaknesses, and that's a lot of what our album is about.

The good part is you recognized it and ran with it.
Yeah, man. Some people think we're a dark band, and that's cool, I get it. I don't really view it like that; it's really what you consider dark. You might think Paris Hilton is dark!

(laughs)
There's a lot of music out there that people can nod their heads to, you know? There's definitely a need for music that people don't need to think when they're listening to it and there's so much of that and I don't want to *be* that, because we're not that.

To summarize *The Study of Man...*the word I would use is "energetic." What I would ask is do you feel you four create the energy or does the energy kind of control you or do you feel the two are chemically dependent of one another?
That's a good question. We have three ways to write and sometimes we will write without even thinking about it and sometimes we get to the studio and there's a bunch of songs that are like that, ones that came right away. I don't know if that's coming from us or anything else. The goal of every artist I would imagine is to really have that channel within wide open and let the energy flow through you. I think that's the difference between seeing certain performers and certain performances, to know there's a certain divinity or something minutely divine, but it's powerful, you know? There's also some human intellect involved in some of the songwriting. I think what it is, is that there's four people who have the gift to write music and they've just stuck with it and they continue to work hard and they continue to try and stay grounded in their lives and keep their minds and their hearts open with the hopes that something pure will come through us.

Reviewers: (RK) Ramsey Kanaan, (STM) Sammy The Mick, (JC) Jimi Cheetah, (RVH) Ray Van Horn JR, (TS) Tristan Staddon, (MWB) Matt "Windbreaker" Cote, (MR) Mike Rodriguez, (NN) Nick Norton, (WMJ) William Jones, (JBM) John Moore, (JCC) Jen Conrad, (JK) Jim Kaz

ALKALINE TRIO
"Remains" CD
The B-side record has almost always been little more than a contract obligation relevant to no one beyond the diehard fans. Historically, the label for the band taking off for greener pastures slaps together a dozen throw away tracks that weren't good enough to make it onto the proper albums, some weak cover songs and a few alternative takes and packages it, trying to make a final buck off the group. It's amazing then how many incredible songs have found their way onto Alkaline Trio's Remains. With 22 songs (including three live tracks) and a DVD, odds were against the band that even half would be worth listening to, but the CD is an amazing testament to one of the few consistently strong dark pop rockers recording today. Singing witty songs with macabre topics dark enough to make the members Bauhaus shake their head, Alkaline Trio perfectly melds melodies with a strong punk rock ethos. Along with the requisite alternative takes and the covers (Berlin's "Metro", The Damned's "Wait for the Blackout" and Hot Water Music's "Rooftops"), the disc is packed with songs from various compilations, any of which are strong enough to have made it on any of the band's past efforts. Remains is one of those rare collection albums that is like heaven to band loyalists, while serving as a perfect starter record to anyone who has never heard of the band. Nearly flawless from start to finish. (JBM)
(www.vagrant.com)



ALKALINE TRIO
"Remains" CD/DVD
With the comps, splits, and everything else ALKALINE TRIO has recorded aside from their major releases, Remains seems like a good idea... and it mostly is. The DVD portion is a little weak, with a few short-length features (surprisingly not much for the two years that are covered) and five music videos. The CD, however, offers 22 (mostly good) tracks in total, but it would have still been nice to get a few that hadn't previously been released. Still, the band/label seems to have spared no expense for the packaging, and actually having liner notes for all but the live tracks is a nice addition, and for anyone who has only picked up the major releases along the way, this is a really cool collection. (WMJ)
(Vagrant / www.vagrant.com)

ALL OUT WAR
"Condemned To Suffer" CD
ALL OUT WAR are credited by some people to be the first metalcore band, and on my introduction to them through "Condemned To Suffer" I can see where they got this title. This 5 piece bring together the thrash elements of NUCLEAR ASSAULT and early SLAYER with the hardcore styling of HATEBREED. I was blown away by the intensity when they chose to play hard and heavy, but also the quieter sections, like on "Destined To Burn". My favorite song is "Rise Of The Anti-Christ" which is ripped straight from the pages of Revelations. You could do way worse than buying this gem! For fans of DEATH BY STEREO and KID DYNAMITE (BBB)
(www.victoryrecords.com)

ANGRA
"Aurora Consurgens" CD
Well-rounded power metal with a world music scope sans Viking helmets and light on the fantastic imagery comes courtesy of Brazil's Angra and their latest 10-track release AURORA CONSURGENS. Juxtaposing elements of progressive metal a la Queensryche with the power metal played by bands like Manowar and Blind Guardian, this disc gets both operatic and oppressively heavy, sometimes, as in the case on "Salvation: Suicide", at the same time. Expressing their need for speed with the same vigor as they convey their yearning to reach the nougat-filled creamy chorus center on cuts like "The Voice Commanding You", Angra makes a metallic concept album about a religious manuscript by Saint Thomas of Aquin the subject matter of one hell of a power metal release. (Mike SOS)
(www.spvusa.com)

BAYSIDE
"The Walking Wounded" CD
The guys in Bayside would have been forgiven if they had decided to clock out after a tragic 2005 van accident that killed their drummer and put their bassist in the hospital for months. Amazingly, guitarist Jack O'Shea and singer Anthony Raneri came back a week later to join their aborted tour, playing as an acoustic duo. Less than a year and a half later, the band is back with a new release, the aptly titled Walking Wounded. Produced by Shep Goodman and Kenny Gioia, a duo known more for guiding pop stars like Mandy Moore than tattooed punks like Bayside, the dozen tracks that make up the record are among the groups best to date. From the title, opening track, complete with a brass section, to the subtle strings on "Dear Your Holiness" the band still has a steady, hard rock foundation, but it's willing to experiment a bit with its sound; A refreshing distinction from many in the genre. Sounding like the second coming of the Smoking Popes, another tragically underrated band that markets in dark, literate pop songs, with Walking Wounded, Bayside has resurrected a decent band and moved their sound from good to great. (JBM)
(www.victoryrecords.com)

BIG D AND THE KIDS TABLE
"Strictly Rude" CD
BIG D AND THE KIDS TABLE comes through with the very, very ska album they promised in Strictly Rude. Longtime BIG D fans shouldn't expect variety of style of How It Goes, but traditional ska fans should be in love with this record. There's no point in singling out any tracks, Strictly Rude delivers 15 solid tunes, each carrying with them the original Jamaican influence of ska combined with the style of Big D and the distinguishable vocals of Dave McWane, giving every song an original, yet traditional, sound all at the same time. Strictly Rude is an incredibly well-written album, both lyrically and musically, and while the variety is of a more narrow kind, it may be the band's best effort to date, and delivers everything it promises. (WMJ)
(SideOneDummy / www.sideonedummy.com)

BILLY REESE PETERS
"Almost Heaven" CD
Don't let the naked man frolicking on the cover scare you away, Almost Heaven is a great, diverse album from the intro track to the cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Traveling Band", which is a perfect fit for the style of BRP—very punk, but with a strong southern rock influence. Every song is solid, including the acoustic, harmonica-laden bonus track. They definitely fit in with the Gainesville/No Idea scene, but they also bring much more to the table. Shit, "The Night That 'Dude' Became a Four-Letter Word" even infuses the slightest bit of horns, effectively. This album is just a great listen from start to finish, and BRP, if you're reading, please come to Chicago. (WMJ)
(No Idea / www.noidearecords.com)

BOYS NIGHT OUT
"50,000,000 People Cannot Be Wrong" CD
This 5 song download EP is a taster for fans while the band are in the studio doing a follow up to 2005's "Trainwreck" album. It contains re-recordings of older material and 2 new songs, all of which sound great, especially if you are into catchy feel good pop punk. My favorite is "Reason Ain't Our Long Suit", which is the kind of song that would fit perfectly on an American Pie movie soundtrack. My only "complaint" is I don't want to wait until the summer for the full album! (BBB)
(www.ferretstyle.com)



BURNING SKYS
"Desolation" CD
Precise and punishing, the 10-track DESOLATION yields a blistering listening experience from end to end. Check out the modern death metal slam of "Damaged" as evidence that this quintet hold Lamb of God and Raging Speedhorn close at heart. Jackhammer rhythms with fine crafting twin guitar slayings adorning the old school charmed "Lurid Demolition" and the cutting "The Sweet Sound of Violence", while "RKD" savagely throws down a chunk of the new death metal flavor championed by bands like The Black Dahlia Murder and The Red Chord. In short, this disc thrashes about with enough tough guy antics and proportionately powerful riffs drawn from a vast spectrum of metal to keep the pit swirling throughout. (Mike SOS)
(www.lifeforcerecords.com)

CITIZEN FISH/LEFTOVER CRACK
"Deadline" Split CD
It's what a good split should be; it mixes two bands diverse enough to make the combination interesting, while close enough in style to attract some common fans. While some may prefer one half of this CD to the other (personally, I think the CITIZEN FISH half is much better), many should thoroughly enjoy the entirety of this 14 track (plus one LEFTOVER CRACK intro) effort. First, CITIZEN FISH delivers their UK brand of ska punk, and LEFTOVER CRACK follows with a more straightforward punk approach, and is kind enough to fill their half of the booklet with liner notes on each song and an interview with a sock monkey, all in a nice digipak. If you're a fan of either of these bands, it's definitely worth the $10, and if you're not, pick it up anyways and you will be. (WMJ)
(Fat Wreck / www.fatwreck.com)

CLASSIC CASE
"Losing at Life" CD
CLASSIC CASE leans more towards the post-hardcore side of the musical spectrum, but their sound is based more in predictable rock beats. With Page Hamilton at the helm, the guitars get their due attention and sound great, and while the production value is top-notch overall, it's the vocal performance that this CD lacks. The pitches are hit, but that's not the problem. There just seems to be a lack of passion in the words, and with otherwise decent yet generic songs, there's nothing that really sticks out on Losing at Life. (WMJ)
(Fearless Records / www.fearlessrecords.com)

CRADLE OF FILTH
"Thornography" CD
The ever-controversial Cradle of Filth return with yet another symphony for the devil with THORNOGRAPHY. Providing the elaborate orchestration, speed metal antics, and dramatic flare like no other, this CD once again cascades over the top of metal's normal excess, making songs like "Under Huntress Moon" and "Libertian Grim" surefire diehard fan pleasers. But as always, Dani Filth and company always have something up their sleeve, and their movie soundtrack cover of Heaven 17's "Temptation" is just one of the many treats you'll get on this 12-track offering. Staying true with all usual tactics in tow on cuts like the Maiden gone black metal vibe of "The Rise of the Pentagram" and the breakneck rhythms and demonic vocals on "Lovesick for Mina", Cradle of Filth triumphantly retains its corpsepainted stripes while showing no fear or repercussion in their experimental dabblings such as working with HIM vocalist Vile Valo on "The Byronic Man". THORNOGRAPHY does the job in turning extreme metal on its ear with the unmistakable Cradle of Filth artistry beaming bright. (Mike SOS)
(www.roadrunnerrecords.com)

DIE HOFFNUNG
"Love Songs" CD
Almost every track is based is based on a mesmerizing, sort of psychotic continuation of a guitar riff. The vocals work their way over the riffs, loosely connected to the tempos. It's interesting at the onset of the album, but just gets redundant and tiring early on, and doesn't change until the very last track—needless to say, way too late. Standing alone, some of the songs are pretty cool, but as an album, it all just blurs together and gets boring fast. (WMJ)
(No Idea / www.nodiearecords.com)

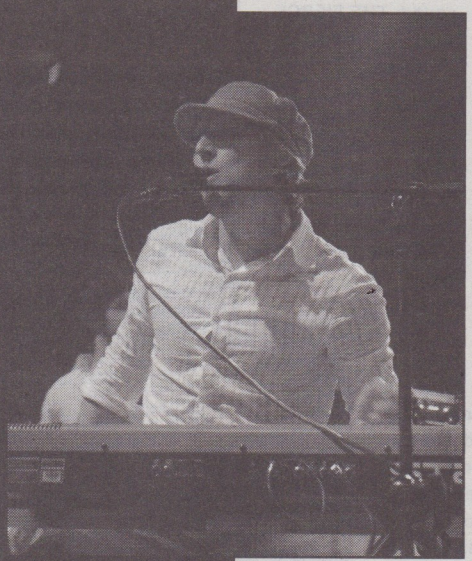
DOLLYROTS
"Because I'm Awesome" CD
Anyone who does "I've Got A Brand New Pair Of Rollerskates" is alright by me. Especially when they're a female-fronted power-pop trio. This is their 2nd full length, and expounds on just how good they are. If you like your pop of the muscular JOAN JETT/MUFFS variety, with considerably more heaviness than sugar, then this'll do quite nicely. Really good. (RK)
(www.blackheart.com)

FALCON
"God Don't Make No Trash" CD EP
More astute readers may remember me raving about the FALCON full length "Unicornography" - for sure the best album of 2006. With the best bits of ALKALINE TRIO and LAWRENCE ARMS, they provided the album OPERATION IVY and FIFTEEN wished they could approximate. It has since been brought to my attention that there is indeed this bit of FALCON pre-history. 5 more tracks that will blow your mind. I kid you not. And believe me, you need your mind blowing by this lot. JAWBREAKER almost sounded this good. For real. (RK)
(www.redscare.net)

FOUR LETTER LIE
"Let Your Body Take Over" CD
Yet another innocuous rock band put out by Victory Records, the five guys from Minnesota which comprise Four Letter Lie do the Taking Back Sunday meets Hawthorne Heights act with dashes of Glassjaw and Coheed and Cambria peeking through the overwrought but not as annoying as normal pseudo tough guy/ angelic vocal tradeoffs heard on tracks like "Cowboys & Indians". Despite the fact that these dudes have rad haircuts and look more well-groomed than Paris Hilton's pooch, the versatile musicianship displayed on cuts like "Full Tilt Boogie" trumps their gone-tomorrow look tenfold, while impassioned tunes like the title track and the driving "Tell Me Everything" illuminate this 12 track release's genre-shifting style and overall strong dynamic switches. Four Letter Lie is an acquired taste, leaning heavy on the Warped Tour punk and screamo/ emo border, but there's enough good stuff inside LET YOUR BODY TAKE OVER to warrant repeated listens. (Mike SOS)
(www.victoryrecords.com)

THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY
"Live At Oslo Jazz Festival" CD
I'm not really an expert on jazz. Actually, I'm definitely not any kind of even casual authority on jazz. Truth be told, I don't even know what a Fender Rhodes is. But on this live disc, recorded in 2002, the Swedish boys and girl are joined by 2 famous (apparently) Swedish jazz musos, one on sax, and one on the Rhodes effort. Between them, the 7 turn 10 (I)NC classics (culled from their first couple of Epitaph discs) into more freeform jams. I dunno if its jazz. Sounds more like the GRATEFUL DEAD groovin on "Smash It Up," "Capitalism Stole My Virginity" et al. They're accomplished, for sure, and I really like the originals. Couldn't quite get into these elongated, hornified versions, but mebbe that's my crass underappreciation of jazz? It's cool to hear the song intros, and between song banter, in Swedish, though. (RK)
(www.alternativetentacles.com)

KADDISFLY
"Set Sail The Prairie" CD
This is my first taste of Kaddisfly, and I've been bowled over! What an incredible work of art this album is! "Set Sail the Prairie" is the second in a trilogy of albums (the first is "Buy Our Intention, We'll Buy You A Unicorn"), and tells the tale of a journey around the world. Their music is magical, with a flair for the unexpected! This is not the normal commercial, radio-blaring music that you hear each day in your car...this is music for the true music fan! Their music is ideal to put on the headphones, close your eyes and transform into another world! Vocalist/pianist Chris Ruff has a smooth, soothing voice which adds yet another dimension to the music. I'm eager to go and get the first album in the trilogy to start where it all began! If you dig good music, are interested in checking out a band that puts their body and soul into an album, are sick of the same ol' same ol', or want to be mindfully challenged by your tune selection, BE SURE to check out Kaddisfly! If you're a fan of Muse, Coheed & Cambria, The Mars Volta, or Blue October, Kaddisfly is a band you need to check out! This band isn't out to conform to the norm, they're out to re-create the norm! A great album! (JCC)
(www.hopelessrecords.com)



DUSTIN KENSRUE
"Please Come Home" CD
JESSE MALIN
"Glitter in the Gutter" CD
A former glam rocker and post hardcore front man try solo careers I'll be the first to admit that I never really understood all the hype around post hardcore rockers Thrice. They had a decent track or two over the years, but I'm at a loss as to why rock critics stumble over each other to praise the group. It's surprising then to be so impressed with the first solo release by Thrice front man Dustin Kensrue. Stepped heavily in the folk and alt country of bands like Wilco and the Old 97's, "Please Come Home" is eight solid tracks of acoustic rock with the occasional backing harmonica. Kensrue's voice - not having to compete with the distortion-heavy guitars from his day job- is remarkable. The slow flow that come out on songs like "Pistol" and his heartfelt delivery on a track like "Please Come Home" are enough to give Ryan Adams notice that his role of troubled troubadour might soon be handed over to Kensrue. Like Kensrue, Jesse Malin, former front man for glam rockers D Generation, is using a solo record to distance himself from his musical past. Malin's results are a bit mixed however. He's managed to excise just about all trace of glam from Glitter in the Gutter, in favor of a rustic alt rock sound. Produced by Ryan Adams, the two pooled together their contacts and were able to get help from Bruce Springsteen, Jakob Dylan, the Foo Fighters Chris Shiflett and Queens of the Stone Age front man Josh Homme. Despite the crowded recording studio, the record still feels a bit underwhelming. There are only a handful of stand out tracks, including a brave take on The Replacements "Bastards of Young" that sounds oddly like Malin's channeling Neil Young, but these songs are few and far between. (JBM)
(www.equalvision.com; www.adelinerecords.net)

KILL HANNAH
"Until There's Nothing Left of Us" CD
With an obvious nod to 80s-style new wave, KH won my heart with their debut album, "For Never and Ever!" Now the Chi-town boys (vocalist/guitarist Mat Devine, bassist Greg Corner, guitarist/backing vocalist Jonathan Radtke, and guitarist/backing vocalist Dan Wiese are back with their sophomore release, "Until There's Nothing Left of Us." This album is a brilliant follow-up to that incredible debut. With a cool intro entitled "Life In the Arctic," KH starts off with an awesome opening track in "Believer," followed by their first single "Lips Like Morphine." Their tunes are full of passionate guitars, spacy keyboards, swelling melodies and an edginess that is absolutely infectious! Lead vocalist, Mat Devine, has one of the most beguiling and unique voices in music! I am, once again, absolutely taken in by Kill Hannah! In addition to 8 brand new tunes, the guys also add an incredible cover of The Church's "Under the Milky Way." Favorite tunes include "Lips Like Morphine," "Love You to Death," and "The Collapse." This album is EXTREMELY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! Fans of new wave, electronica, or bands like Panic! At the Disco, The Killers, Ima Robot or 30 Seconds to Mars, should DEFINITELY check out this album! (JCC)
(Atlantic Records / www.atlanticrecords.com)

LEFTOVER CRACK/CITIZEN FISH
"Deadline" CD
Bloody hell. This is so good. The two pre-eminent ska/punk powerhouses showcase 5 new tracks each (well, to be accurate, 6 from the CRACK) - and in my humble opinion, as good as anything, if not better, than they've done heretofore. If that's not enough, each covers a classic from their current, and former (ie SUBHUMANS and CHOKING VICTIM) incarnations. Quite superb, and quite restores one's faith in the power of crust and grubbiness! A Match made in the heaven of your favorite squatted basement. (RK)
(www.fatwreck.com)

LORDI
"The Arockalypse" CD
Horror shock-rock meets Gwar-inspired latex gore gone KISS-inspired mad best describes the mania that is Lordi. This quintet play the kind of sugar-coated hair metal anthems that Europeans can't get enough of, putting whips and chains on AC/DC on "Bringing Back the Balls to Rock" and even getting the legendary Udo to contribute to "They Only Come Out at Night". Best served with barrels of beer in a soccer stadium, this Finnish fivesome's latest entry into the metal costume ball gets a VIP pass. (Mike SOS)
(www.theendrecords.com)

MOROS EROS
"I Saw The Devil Last Night And Now The Sun Shines Bright" CD
Taking a decidedly angular approach while accentuating their fertile brand of indie rock with a slew of widespread influences, this endearing Georgia quartet can be stylistically linked to everyone from dredg to My Morning Jacket on I SAW THE DEVIL LAST NIGHT AND NOW THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT. Just check out the QOSTA freakout found on "I Saw the Devil Last Night" and the near-dance music quality which

catapults "I Will Come Back Again" from being a typical punk rock anthem into something way more extraordinary as indicators of the master manipulation this outfit puts on throughout this 12-track offering. Equally eloquent, elegant, and mentally engrossing, Moros Eros is an esoteric punk rock group whose penchant for everything left of center whips up a frenzied yet totally satisfying listening experience. (Mike SOS) www.victoryrecords.com

MXPX
"Let It Happen" CD
Citadels of punk rock consistency, MXPX's latest 32-track release is a stacked reissue of the aforementioned album plus a whole lot more. Like three new studio tracks, old demos, and a DVD video compilation (not bad, eh?). While it's a given to say that this endeavor is jammed to the gills, this collection renders the opportunity for old fans ands newcomers alike to take an all-inclusive trip through MXPX's Northwestern punk rock journey. (Mike SOS) (www.toothandnail.com)

MY BITTER END
"The Renovation" CD


My Bitter End play the type of technical metal you need a industrial-sized slide rule to figure out on the 11-track THE RENOVATION. Truly developing a potpourri of sounds that range from death metal vocal gutpunches and squeals, intricate technical metal compositions, Killswitch melodic guitar swagger, screamo metal fretboard antics, and spastic turned deadly breakdowns, you may need a scorecard to follow it all. Nailing a certified power metal gallop on "To All Things Expendable" before the clouds close in and this upstate NY unit's version of metalcore melancholy takes over, this quintet displays its music geek locked in his room for eight hours with his instrument side with enough tough guy ammo and hardcore demolition skills on tracks like the power groove gone math of "The Suburbs Breed Showmen" to pull it all off. Think All That Remains going toe to toe with Misery Signals with Dillinger Escape Plan as special guest referee to sort it all out. (Mike SOS)
(www.uprisingrecords.com)

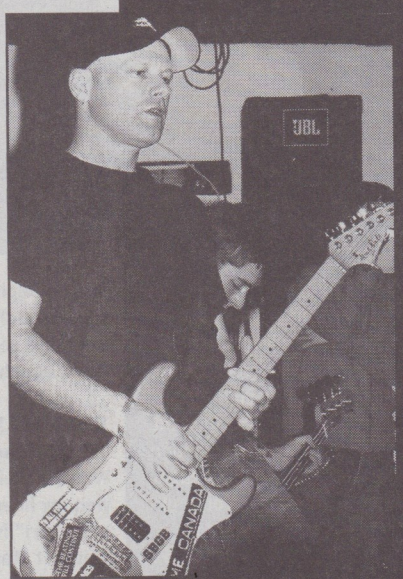
ONLY CRIME
"Virulence" CD
Finally a hardcore punk band without the eyeliner. On their blistering sophomore record, the punk rock super group Only Crime- featuring members of Good Riddance, Bane and The Descendents- turn in a remarkably satisfying release, brimming with distorted guitars, thundering drums and angry vocals. Though they flirt with melody every now and then on songs like "Shotgun" and "Just Us", the band is just as apt to launch into an aggressively powerful track worthy of their hardcore heritage. (JBM)
(www.fatwreck.com; www.onlycrime.com)

PASSION
"The Fierce Urgency Of Now" CD
The City of Brotherly Love is the hometown of this mighty hardcore quintet known as Passion, whose explosive musical output and imminent album title make for a perfect pair. Just as concerned with packing your cranium with knowledge as they are crushing it into bits, this visceral unit displays the sonic audacity of a band under Kurt Ballou's spell with shards of raw power and sheer aggression providing the wind beneath their wings. Demonstrating hardcore punk at its finest while emanating scathing commentaries and scolding riffs that protrude through a viscous wall of sound, THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW combines Zao, Black Flag, and Modern Life is War into a volatile package suitable for including in a Molotov cocktail and throwing through a window. (Mike SOS) (www.goodfellowrecords.com)

PERMANENT ME
"After the Room Clears" CD
Hey Fall Out Boy fans! Did you happen to notice the band opening for your boys on their Friends or Enemies tour with New Found Glory and The Early November? An awesome new band called Permanent Me? I'm sorry to say that I wasn't able to see this tour, but I've been duly impressed by Permanent Me! Their debut full-length album has just dropped on Stolen Transmission Records, and I gotta tell you...this is a majorly kick-ass album! If you dig any of the bands mentioned above, you will totally dig PM! I've been listening to this debut for the last few days, and there's just something a bit different about this band...something a little special! To be honest, it's difficult to put my finger on it, but I just love 'em! They're punk...with a lot of pop, tons of hooks and awesome lyrics! But...embedded somewhere in there is an extremely appealing bit of old-school flair...a little edgy, a little retro undertone...maybe it's the versatility of their guitars, maybe it's the smooth, mature melodies...or maybe it's all of the above. Whatever it is, it totally works for me! This is an album that I'll be pulling out all year long! Favorite tunes include "Twenty Years," first single "Until You Leave," "Allison," "Dead To You," and "New York City." This is truly a great album to check out! (JCC)
(Stolen Transmission Records / www.stolentransmissionrecords.com)

PIEBALD
"Accidental Gentleman" CD
Piebald's Accidental Gentleman is a fresh take on an indie rock genre that can often get pretty stale. It's not always great, but it's constantly interesting. Every song is very much a rock song, but at the same time, almost every track has its own style. Again, they aren't all good, but a majority are pretty cool, and everything keeps the listener interested throughout. If nothing else, Accidental Gentleman is at least worth a listen for anyone who says they're a fan of rock music. (WMJ)
(SideOneDummy / www.sideonedummy.com)

THE QUEERS
"The Queers Are Here" DVD
The Queers Are Here is what you should probably expect from a QUEERS DVD. It's not very high-quality—in fact, the quality of video and audio is all over the place, as it's a compilation of videos taken over the years—but it's definitely entertaining. All-in-all, there are 28 songs, divided by segments from a couple different interviews with Joe Queer. It's $15 for barley over an hour of footage, no extras, but if you're a fan of The Queers, it's a chance to see them live all over the world, great bits of Joe ripping apart the current music scene, a few music videos, and that's basically worth the price right there. I hoped for more, but it's still a very entertaining DVD. (WMJ)
(MVD Visual / www.mvdvisual.com)



THE ROMAN NUMERALS
S/T CD

A seasoned semi-Gothic tone comes courtesy of Kansas City, MO's The Roman Numerals. The spry musicians who comprise this outfit have played in acts such as Season to Risk and Shiner, and their whole formation hinged from a one-off Joy Division tribute band on Halloween, contributing to the band's dark-edged vibes emanating from cuts like "My Life After Death Part 1" and the bottom heavy "Deep Loft". Fusing their moody aura with a dance rock aesthetic akin to what's going down today in indie rock land, this disc's blend of dreamy reverb and driving rhythms on tracks like "Msr. Control" totally resurrects the best of Psychedelic Furs without getting any of that Panic at the Disco nasty aftertaste. With slices of Fugazi and Joy Division as garnish on the whimsically grave "Can We Trust Your Architect" and detailed understanding of '80s gloom sprinkled throughout, this eponymous affair can be shared by the hip kids and outcasts alike. (Mike SOS)
(www.anodynerecords.com)

RX BANDITS
"And the Battle Began" CD

Finally off the Drive Thru Records roster, one-time ska band RX Bandits have grown up a bit, and decided to shed their past image. On And the Battle Began, their first effort for their own label, the band still has a horn section, but has pretty much excised all trace of the ska sound that helped launch the band. Although the group played around with a reggae sound on their last release And the Battle Began is much more experimental, both lyrically and musically. A decent album, it is far less accessible than earlier records like Progress and is likely to turn off as many as it inspires. (JBM)
(www.mdbrecords.com)

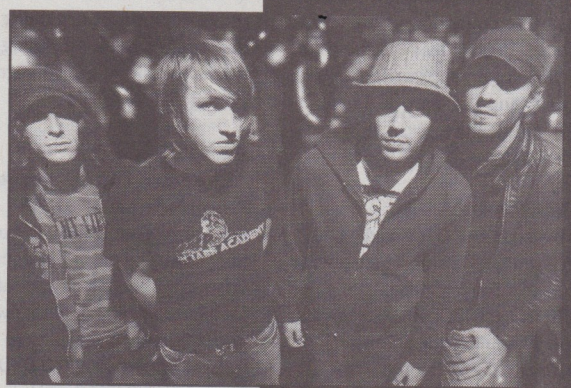
SCARS OF TOMORROW
"The Failure In Drowning" CD

Southern California metalcore stalwarts Scars of Tomorrow return with THE FAILURE OF DROWNING, a well-manicured 11-track metalcore affair full of seething riffs and scornful lyrics. Songs like "The Unwinding" illuminate the band's undeniable love of the chunky riff, while "Relive the Curse" and "The Silence of Sorrow" get the pit going with staccato headbanging riffs. If you're looking for a buffer between Norma Jean and Full Blown Chaos, this disc is the perfect choice. (Mike SOS)
(www.victoryrecords.com



SIX FEET UNDER
"Commandment" CD

SIX FEET UNDER are back with a vengeance on their new album "Commandment", which boasts 10 slabs of raging death metal. This could just be their greatest recording ever, as every song has a melodic element that totally gels with the pounding drums and searing guitar work. Although Chris Barnes delivers his vocals in the usual gravely style, this time there is a certain accessibility that should see this record crossover into the mainstream consciousness of more general metal fans. Obviously with a record this good it is virtually impossible to dissect and choose stand out tracks, but my favorites already are "Ghosts Of The Undead", "Doomsday" and "The Edge Of The Hatchet". If you are a SIX FEET UNDER fan you know you will buy this, but if you have never heard them or not been impressed before I suggest you get hold of this monster. (BBB)
(www.metalblade.com)



SMOKE OR FIRE
"This Sinking Ship" CD

SMOKE OR FIRE sacrifices some of the rough aggression of their earlier efforts for a slick narrative style this time around. Fortunately, it works to the album's advantage, while the music is otherwise par for the course. Overall, it's a really good effort by the band, as introspective as it is finger-pointing, yet, the lack of variety in songs seems just a bit lazy. The vocal performance is enough to give it life, however, making This Sinking Ship a worthwhile listen. (WMJ)
(Fat Wreck Chords / www.fatwreck.com)

SMOKE OR FIRE
"This Sinking Ship" CD

On this, their second full length, this Richmond, VA quarter have really distilled their influences into something more than the sum of the parts. Sure, one can hear the anthemic drive of AVAIL and HOT WATER MUSIC, the melody of STRIKE ANYWHERE, and that's all good. Very good. But, even better, they've taken these strands, and twisted em up into something they can truly call their own. So much the better. (RK)
(www.fatwreck.com)

SPITALFIELD
"Better Than Knowing Where You Are" CD

There's a lot of '80s rock Spitalfield doesn't bother to hide, as well as alt rock radio transplanting and good old middle America indie rock portions assisting this act's latest. Not as sugary sweet as Hawthorne Heights (yet reaching close at times), Spitalfield produces just enough syrup to adorn tracks like "The Only Thing That Matters". Revealing rugged twin guitars and a unspectacular but solid vocal performance throughout, "...Listen" and "Lasting First Impression" seamlessly joins Foo Fighter-esque crescendos with Jimmy Eat World-like melodies, as this group's third CD still manages to grab your attention with those damn hooky choruses gracing tracks like ""Tell Me, Clarice" and the fist-pumping pop punk title track. Other bands from this Chicago quartet's peer group have gone on to accomplish great things, and this 12-track disc is Spitalfield's permit to enter that realm. (Mike SOS)
(www.victoryrecords.com)

STOLEN BABIES
"There Be Squabbles Ahead" CD

Stolen Babies is an ensemble who place no boundaries on themselves judging by THERE BE SQUABBLES AHEAD. This enigmatic 13-track presentation plays like a trip to the heavy metal carnival, complete with frequent rest stops at punk rock fury, prog rock attentiveness, and goth rock mystique. A plethora of instruments and a wide array of influences have been crammed inside these songs, giving "Filistata" and "Gathering Fingers" strong rock sensibilities wrapped around a vaudevillian sideshow display. If you dig Kate Bush, Mr. Bungle, and other acts with the flare for the dramatic and dynamic, this disc will be a welcomed addition to your collection. (Mike SOS)
(www.theendrecords.com)

SUNDOWNER
"Four One Five Two" CD
LAWRENCE ARMS are truly a prolific band. And fortunately, their various members are incredibly productive. And luckily for the world, Red Scare are always there to showcase their prodigious talent, and output. In this case, Chris, the 'nice' voice from the ARMS presents his first solo acoustic effort. The 12 tracks (including two reworked ARMS compositions) are wonderfully augmented by Jenny Chois, who lends her voice, keyboard, cello and glockenspiel to the mix, and adds depth, and color to a rather sterling collection of tunes. As if there was any doubt, this really puts the man at the forefront of the singer/songwriter gaggle. Highly recommended, and it's not often I say that for an acoustic punk. (RK)
(Red Scare/www.redscare.net)

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
"Dear Love: A Beautiful Discord" CD
The Devil Wears Prada takes a stab at a number of different styles on this Dayton, OH sextet's DEAR LOVE: A BEAUTIFUL DISCORD. Displaying a balls out heavy yet playfully experimental side, this unit ferociously dissects metalcore convention by adding keyboard overlays for chilling black metal effects while demonstrating the versatility to switch from a bouncy screamo part into the depths of hellraising metal on a dime. While songs like "Gauntlet of Solitude" dizzy thanks to the amount of changes contained, tracks like "Redemption" drum up a cinematic appeal with the majestic might of Swedish metal before treading into a progressive technical metal soiree. Screaming and yelling its way through, adorned with piles of jagged grooves and brutal breakdowns, songs like "Texas is South" showcase The Devil Wears Prada's distinct punk rock frustration sound that shares as much in common with Bleeding Through and Sworn Enemy as it does the local bill playing at the VFW hall. (Mike SOS)
(www.riserecords.com)

THIS IS MY FIST
"A History of Rats" CD
As much as I find myself popping it in and trying to, I can't seem to get into this album. It's an aggressive punk style lead by Annie's raspy vocals, but it just doesn't work for me. The melodic nature of their sound only seems to last for about half of A History of Rats, at which point some of the mumbled style of punk vocals come in almost making you wonder if the band is just tone deaf. A few of the better tracks stick out, but otherwise its fairly standard, mostly fast rock beats, the only thing separating it from the crowd being the vocals, which really get to me by the end of every listen. I'm sure a lot of the usual No Idea fans will still get into this one, but it's just not for me. (WMJ)
(No Idea / www.noidearecords.com)

UNKOWN INSTRUCTORS
"The Master's Voice" CD
This is the second release from this conglomeration of famous old-timers, The MINUTEMEN rhythm section. Joe Biazza of SACCHARINE TRUST on geetar, and Dan McGuire. Plus additional spoken musings by David Thomas (PERE UBU and OCKET FROM THE TOMBS) and SST illustrator extraordinaire, Raymond Pettibon. Various meandering jazzy soundscapes provide the backdrop for spoken word. Somewhat akin to early GIL SCOTT-HERON, or what a lot of the more avant-garde improv Beats and more were doing in the 50s and 60s. If that sounds at all intriguing, well, its cos it is. 10 tracks for you to get your groove on with. (RK)
(Smog Veil Records)

VARIOUS
"Appetite for Deconstruction: A Punk Documentary" DVD
It's like Warped Tour without all the assholes, they say early on in the documentary of Europe's Deconstruction festival. It's a great look into a really cool festival I didn't even know existed. It features a diverse lineup, and the DVD weaves together interviews and live performances of bands like Mad Caddies, Lagwagon, Strike Anywhere, The Movement, Capdown, MxPx, and more. Between the documentary and the extra features, the DVD is packed full of content...almost too much content. If I had any complaint about Appetite for Deconstruction, it's that the main feature is an hour too long. I'm not opposed to all the great stuff that's on here, but it's 2 hours and 40 minutes for the main feature, with a lot of extended BMX scenes that aren't all that exciting and would have made better extras. Still, very cool documentary that everyone who likes good music should check out. (WMJ)
(MVD Visual / www.mvdvisual.com)



VARIOUS
"Take Action: Volume 6" CD/DVD
It's a compilation, there isn't much unreleased material on it, and while it caters to a specific crowd, there is still a wide variety of music—meaning select tracks you'll love, some you'll hate, and most will just fall somewhere in the middle. Still, I have to recommend this comp to anyone looking for a cheap way to check out a lot of tunes. It's $8, with 72 tracks (three of which are PSAs) between the two CDs and accompanying DVD. Some of the videos are really cool, and there are enough good bands like Rise Against, Strike Anywhere, etc, to make it worthwhile. Plus, a portion of the proceeds go to charity, so it's one of those win-win situations. (WMJ)
(Hopeless Records / www.hopelessrecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Take Action! Volume 6" CD
It's hard to believe that we're already to Volume 6, but the Take Action! project is diligent in finding amazing bands to get the word out about this extremely worthwhile cause! The Take Action! Tour is underway, this year being headlined by The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, featuring Kaddisfly, Scary Kids Scaring Kids, Paramore, and Cute is What We Aim For, to name a few. How can you expect anything but awesome from a compilation of the same name? For those of you not familiar...every year, bands join the Take Action! Tour to help promote awareness of teen/young adult suicide, by letting people know that help is available to them through the Youth America Hotline! (YAH!) at 1-877-YOUTHLINE (968-8454) and the Kristin Brooks Hope Center which manages the Hopeline Network at 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433). This compilation album doesn't disappoint as they feature various genres of bands to whet our appetite for any kind of music you dig! If you're a screamo or metal fan, they've got your hookup on this album with performances by Scary Kids Scaring Kids, The Bled, Drop Dead, Gorgeous, It Dies Today, and Fear Before the March of Flames (of course, that's just a sampling). If you're a punk or rock fan...no problem there either! Performances by The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, My Chemical Romance, Senses Fail, Anti-Flag, Rise Against, Self Against City, Taking Back Sunday, The Casualties, and many others will surely have you jamming in no time!!! "Take Action! Volume 6" is a TRIPLE album set featuring 2 CDs with 43 tracks from 43 different bands AND a DVD with 29 features! This album is pure gold!!! C'mon, get your ass out there and snag this album and help this worthy cause!!! Other bands featured on this album: Emery, All Time Low, Meg & Dia, Drive By, Escape the Fate, A Static Lullaby, He Is Legend, In Flames, Into Eternity, Misery Signals, So They Say, No Trigger, Strike Anywhere, The Falcon, The Briggs, These Arms Are Snakes, Heavens, Crash Romeo, The Hush Sound, Damiera, Paulson, The Spill Canvas, Copeland, The Honorary Title, The Secret Handshake, and Lakes. (JCC)
(Sub City Records / Hopeless Records www.subcity.net, www.hopelessrecords.com)

BANDS AND THEIR VANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID JOHN SITTIG OF IMPENDING DOOM

Full Name: David John Sittig
Band Name: Impending Doom
Van Name: The Tin Can
Make: Chrysler 15 passenger
Model: An ugly one ha, nobody really knows anymore.
Year: 1986 I think.

Does the van have any interesting modifications, i.e. loft, bigger engine, diamond windows, fancy paint? Did you do them? Yeah, we have spray paint all over our van, and cardboard window that says "METAL" spelled with black tape.

Where did you get it? A Mexican guy.

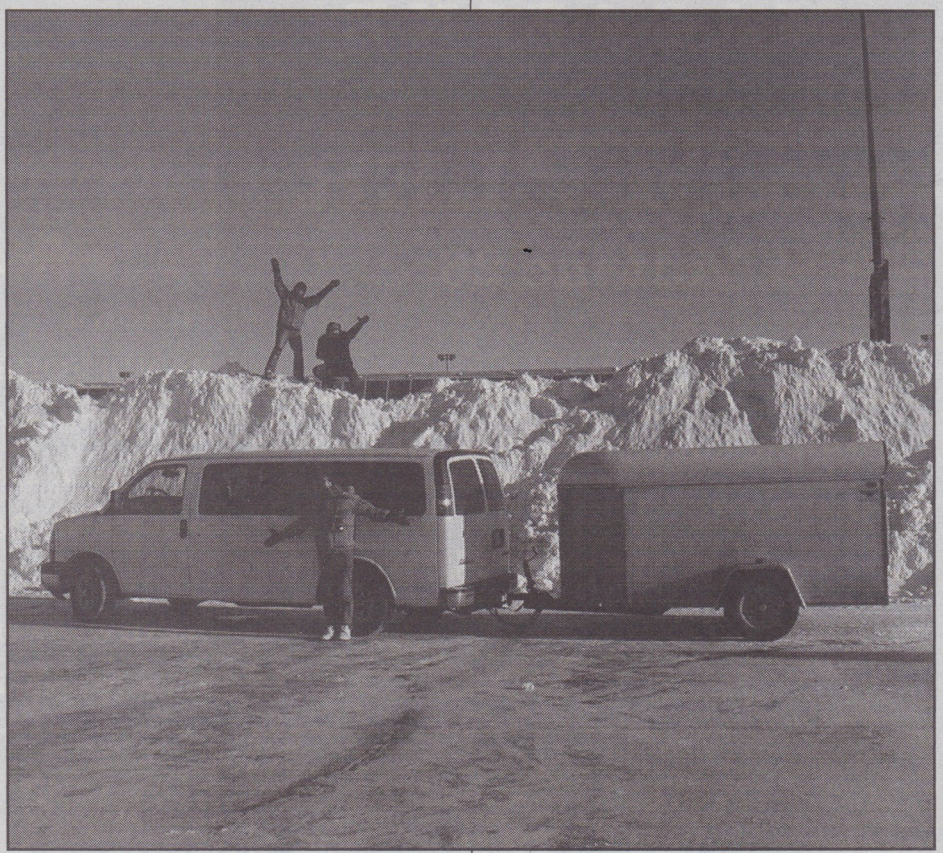
Is there any history behind the van? Well, we get it fixed, and then it breaks right at the end of tour, and then we get it fixed again, haha its an ongoing cycle of fun!

How long have you had it? Little over a year now.

Where have you taken it (tours)? California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Idaho.

How many miles have you put on it? A couple thousand.

Where do you plan on taking it (up-coming tours)? All the way across the U.S.A. to Maine and back, but we all have thoughts that it wont make it out of the state ha.



Is there a driver in the band, i.e. the one who is always behind the wheel? Who? Why? Mostly Brook drives, but we switch off with everyone.

Can/do all of you sleep in the van? Yes, sometimes we even each get our own row.

Any interesting sleeping stories you would like to share, i.e. dreams, sex, etc.? Um... not that I can think of.

Do you or any one in the band do the maintenance? If so, to what extent? Brook usually gives the van oil and coolant.

Tell me about the worst van related horror story, i.e. fire, accident, hit a deer, etc. We have blown out each tire on this van almost twice now.

Does the band have any van rules? If so, what are they? No rules for us.

Any advice for those bands who don't have a van and are looking to buy one? Look for a cheap used one, they are more fun than new 2007 econoline white vans, trust me.

Tell me about your dream van? One that runs.

AMP MAGAZINE

SAMPLER

Volume 26

If you like what you hear, check out the info below and go out and buy a record from the artists. Support the scene.



TRACK 1

BAND: FOREVERINMOTION

SONG: "Hot Air Balloon"

RECORD: The Beautiful Unknown

RELEASE DATE: 5/8/07

LABEL: One Eleven Records

WEB: www.111records.com

www.foreverinmotion.net



TRACK 2

BAND: FIGHTSTAR

SONG: "Paint Your Target"

RECORD: Grand Unification

RELEASE DATE: 5/15/07

LABEL: Trustkill Records

WEB: www.trustkill.com



TRACK 3

BAND: LENNY

SONG: "Rapture"

RECORD: We Are Criminals EP

RELEASE DATE: Out Now!

LABEL: The Momentum Label

WEB: www.lennymusic.com

www.myspace.com/lenny



TRACK 4

BAND: HOPESFALL

SONG: "RX Contender The Pretender"

RECORD: Magnetic North

RELEASE DATE: 5/15/07

LABEL: Trustkill Records

WEB: www.trustkill.com



TRACK 5

BAND: MADINA LAKE

SONG: "House Of Cards"

RECORD: From Them, Through Us, To You

RELEASE DATE: Out Now!

LABEL: Roadrunner Records

WEB: www.madinalake.com



TRACK 6

BAND: NIGHT KILLS THE DAY

SONG: "Rainbows In NYC"

RECORD: The Study Of Man

RELEASE DATE: Out Now!

LABEL: Score Records

WEB: www.nightkillstheday.com

www.myspace.com/nightkillstheday



TRACK 7

BAND: THE TOASTERS

SONG: "You're Gonna Pay"

RECORD: One More Bullet

RELEASE DATE: 4/24/07

LABEL: Stomp Records

WEB: www.stomprecords.com



TRACK 8

BAND: NEKROMANTIX

SONG: "NekroHigh"

RECORD: Life Is A Grave & I Dig It!"

RELEASE DATE: 4/10/07

LABEL: Hellcat Records

WEB: www.nekromantix.com



TRACK 9

BAND: I AM THE OCEAN

SONG: "Chasing Bears & Reading Scripture"

RECORD: And your City Needs Swallowing

RELEASE DATE: 5/15/07

LABEL: Uprising Records

WEB: www.uprisingrecords.com



TRACK 10

BAND: ME VS THE MONSTER

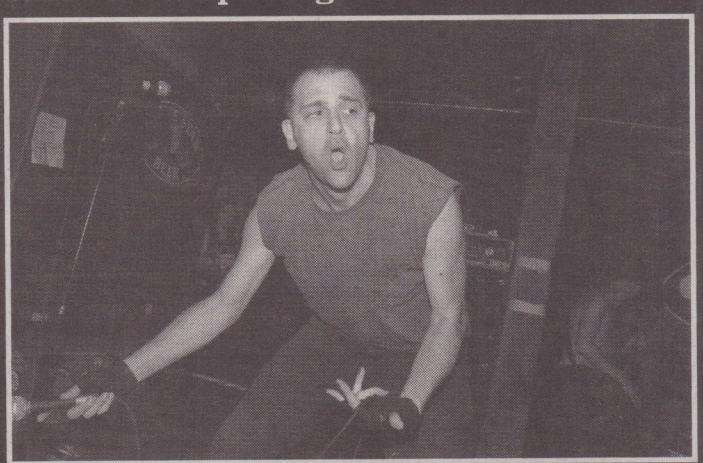
SONG: "Next Of Kin"

RECORD: ...And Remember Kids Live In Fear

RELEASE DATE: Out Now!

LABEL: Show Of Hands Records

WEB: www.mvtm.net



TRACK 11

BAND: THE DWARVES

SONG: "FEFU"

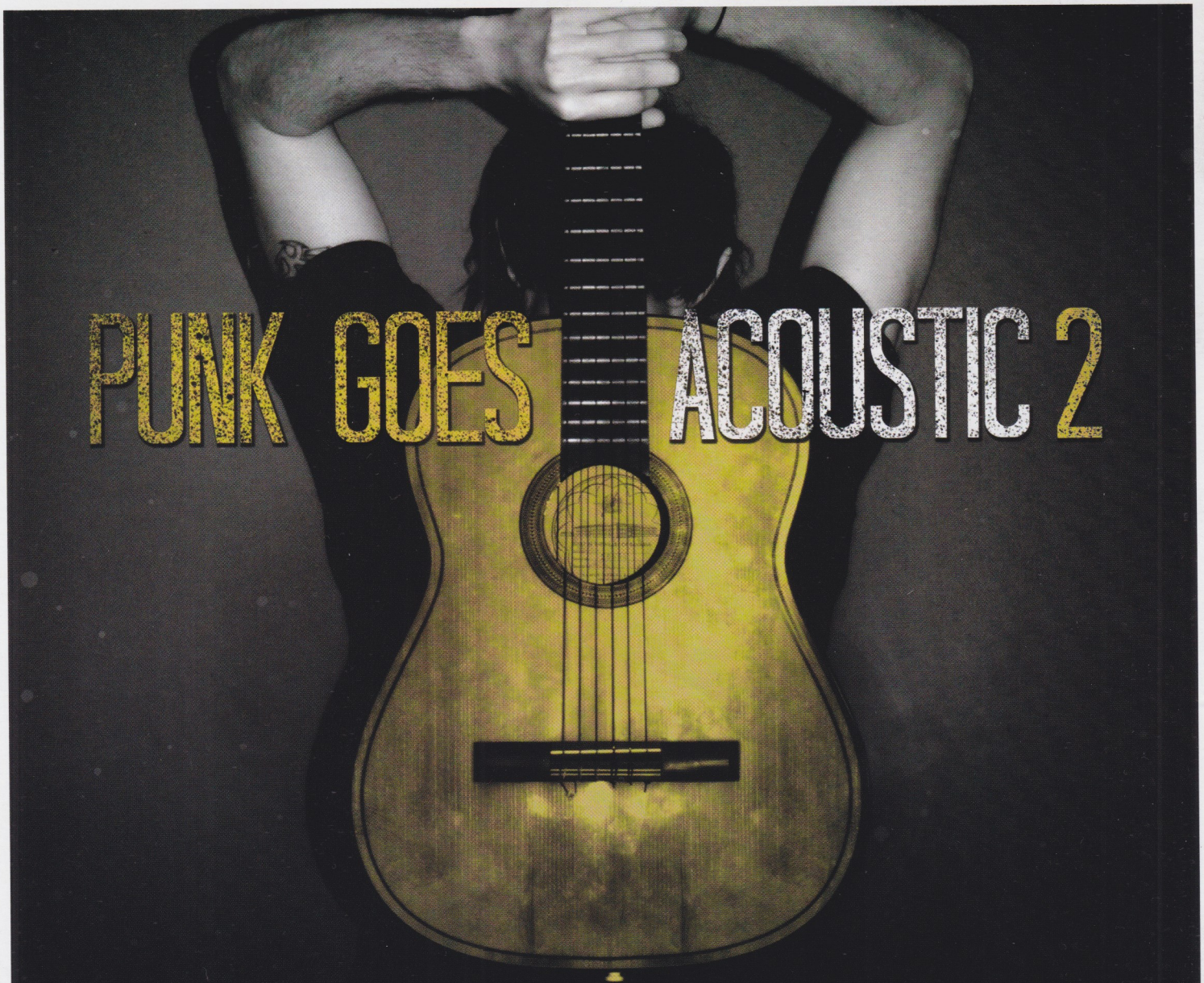
RECORD: The Dwarves Must Die

RELEASE DATE: Out Now!

LABEL: Sympathy For The Record Industry

WEB: www.thedwarves.com


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5. MADINA LAKE - "House Of Cards"
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11. THE DWARVES - "FEFU"
HOPESFALL
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AMP
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